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## A Second Reformation?

Krijger, Tom-Eric Marinus

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## A Second Reformation?

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*Photograph on cover:* stained-glass windows in the building of the Varsseveld branch of the *Nederlandsche Protestantenbond/Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB/Vrijzinnigen Nederland*, made on the occasion of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this branch in 1998. The windows symbolise harmony (*left*), liberty (*centre*) and love (*right*). The then logo of the NPB, still used by *Vrijzinnigen Nederland* in 2017, depicts a chalice with a flame, and is engraved in the centre window.

*Stained-glass windows designed and made by* Marie-Huberte Meijer-Paumen.

*Photograph taken by* Rinus Luijmes.

*Photograph obtained through the kind offices of* Tonnie Kraan, chairman of *Vrijzinnigen Nederland* in Varsseveld.

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# **A Second Reformation?**

Liberal Protestantism in Dutch Religious, Social and Political Life,  
1870-1940

## **Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de  
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen  
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rector magnificus prof. dr. E. Sterken  
en volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties.

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door

**Tom-Eric Marinus Krijger**

geboren op 13 augustus 1987  
te Tiel



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Prof. dr. D.J. Wolffram

*to my parents*

*and to the memory of my grandparents*



*A minha pátria é a minha língua.*

Fernando Pessoa



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<sup>1</sup> I would like to reassure those who might think that I am gender biased: the decisive reason to use the metaphor of a girlfriend is that the gender of the noun ‘dissertation’ is feminine. By no means do I imply that jealousy is an intrinsically ‘feminine’ trait.



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Groningen,  
Reformation Day 2016

# ABBREVIATIONS AND NOTES TO READER

## 1. Abbreviations of Names of Organisations

<div> <div>■</div> Original spelling         </div> <div> <div>□</div> Spelling in effect since the orthographic reforms of the Dutch language in 1946/1947         </div> <div> <div>▣</div> No difference between original and post-1946/1947 spelling         </div>		
	Full Name in Original Language	Full Name in English
AEPMV	<i>Allgemeine evangelisch-protestantische Missionsverein</i>	General Protestant Missionary Society
ANRO	<div>■</div> <i>Algemeene Nederlandsche Radio-Omroep</i> <div>□</div> <i>Algemene Nederlandse Radio-omroep</i>	General Dutch Radio Broadcasting Corporation
ARP	<div>▣</div> <i>Anti-Revolutionaire Partij</i>	Anti-Revolutionary Party
AUA		American Unitarian Association
AVRO	<div>■</div> <i>Algemeene Vereeniging Radio-Omroep</i> <div>□</div> <i>Algemene Vereniging Radio-omroep</i>	General Radio Broadcasting Corporation
BCS	<div>▣</div> <i>Bond van Christen-Socialisten</i>	League of Christian Socialists
BFUA		British and Foreign Unitarian Association
BVL	<div>▣</div> <i>Bond van Vrije Liberalen</i>	League of Free Liberals
CC	<div>▣</div> <i>Centrale Commissie v/h Vrijzinnig Protestantisme</i>	Central Commission for Liberal Protestantism
CHU	<div>▣</div> <i>Christelijk-Historische Unie</i>	Christian Historical Union
CPN	<div>▣</div> <i>Communistische Partij van Nederland</i>	Communist Party of the Netherlands
GKN	<div>▣</div> <i>Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland</i>	Reformed Churches in the Netherlands
HDO	<div>■</div> <i>Hilversumsche Draadloze Omroep</i> <div>□</div> <i>Hilversumse Draadloze Omroep</i>	Hilversum Wireless Broadcasting Corporation
IARF	<div>▣</div> <i>Internationaal Verbond voor Vrijzinnig Christendom en Geloofsvrijheid</i>	International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom
KRO	<div>▣</div> <i>Katholieke Radio-Omroep</i>	Catholic Radio Broadcasting Corporation
NCRV	<div>■</div> <i>Nederlandsche Christelijke Radio-Vereeniging</i> <div>□</div> <i>Nederlandse Christelijke Radiovereniging</i>	Dutch Christian Radio Broadcasting Association
NCSV	<div>■</div> <i>Nederlandsche Christen-Studenten Vereeniging</i> <div>□</div> <i>Nederlandse Christen-studentenvereniging</i>	Dutch Christian Student Association
NHK	<div>■</div> <i>Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk</i> <div>□</div> <i>Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk</i>	Dutch Reformed Church
NOV	<div>■</div> <i>Nederlandsche Omroep-Vereeniging</i> <div>□</div> <i>Nederlandse Omroepvereniging</i>	Dutch Broadcasting Association
NPB	<div>■</div> <i>Nederlandsche Protestantenbond</i> <div>□</div> <i>Nederlandse Protestantenbond</i>	Dutch League of Protestants
NSB	<div>▣</div> <i>Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging</i>	National Socialist Movement
NSF	<div>■</div> <i>Nederlandsche Seintoestellenfabriek</i> <div>□</div> <i>Nederlandse Seintoestellenfabriek</i>	Dutch Transmitter Factory
NVB	<div>■</div> <i>Nederlandsche Volks-Beweging</i> <div>□</div> <i>Nederlandse Volksbeweging</i>	Dutch People's Movement

NZG	■ <i>Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap</i> □ <i>Nederlands Zendelinggenootschap</i>	Dutch Missionary Society
PKNI	■ <i>Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië</i> □ <i>Protestantse Kerk in Nederlands-Indië</i>	Protestant Church in the Dutch East Indies
PvdA	■ <i>Partij van de Arbeid</i>	Labour Party
RSV	■ <i>Religieus-Socialistisch Verbond</i>	Religious Socialist League
SDAP	■ <i>Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij</i>	Social Democratic Workers' Party
SDB	■ <i>Sociaal-Democratische Bond</i>	Social Democratic League
SGP	■ <i>Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij</i>	Political Reformed Party
SSR	<i>Societas Studiosorum Reformatorum</i>	Reformed Student Society
USA		United States of America
VARA	■ <i>Vereeniging van Arbeiders Radio-Amateurs</i> □ <i>Vereniging van Arbeiders Radioamateurs</i>	Association of Workers' Radio Amateurs
VCJB	■ <i>Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jongerenbond</i>	Liberal Christian Youth League
VCJC	■ <i>Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jeugdcentrale</i>	Liberal Christian Youth Centre
VCJGB	■ <i>Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jeugdgemeenschappenbond</i>	Liberal Christian League of Youth Communities
VCL	■ <i>Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum</i>	Liberal Christian Grammar School
VCSB	■ <i>Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Studentenbond</i>	Liberal Christian League of Students
VDB	■ <i>Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond</i>	Liberal Democratic League
VPRO <sup>1</sup>	■ <i>Vrijzinnig-Protestantsche Radio-Omroep</i> □ <i>Vrijzinnig-Protestantse Radio-omroep</i>	Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation
VVD	■ <i>Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie</i>	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy
VVH	■ <i>Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden</i> □ <i>Vereniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden</i>	Association of Reformed Liberals

## 2. Bibliographical Abbreviations<sup>2</sup>

BLGNP	<i>Biografisch Lexicon voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlandse Protestantisme</i>
BMGN	<i>Bijdragen en Mededelingen betreffende de Geschiedenis der Nederlanden</i>
BNPP	<i>Bibliografie van Nederlandse Protestantse Periodieken</i>
BPL	<i>Bibliothecae Publicae Latini</i>
IISG	<i>Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis</i>
NL-AsdSAA	<i>Stadsarchief Amsterdam</i>
NL-HaNA	<i>Nationaal Archief</i>

<sup>1</sup> In historiography, a distinction is sometimes made between the V.P.R.O. and the VPRO. The first abbreviation (with dots) is then used in reference to the period between 1926 and 1968, when the Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation was broadcasting programmes explicitly intended to propagate liberal Protestant ideas and principles. The second abbreviation (without dots) is then used in reference to the period after 1968, when this broadcasting corporation was 'taken over' by a generation of politically progressive, non-religious programme makers, and lost its liberal Protestant basis entirely. As a result, the abbreviation literally became meaningless, and became a 'brand' in itself. For two reasons, however, only the abbreviation without dots is used in this study. First, both in present-day English and Dutch, dots are no longer used in abbreviations of names of organisations. From a stylistic point of view, it would therefore be incongruous to make one exception. Second, because this study deals with the V.P.R.O./VPRO only prior to the Second World War, it is obvious that when mention is made of this broadcasting corporation, the 'v' and 'p' still actually stood for 'Liberal Protestant'.

<sup>2</sup> Abbreviations starting with 'NL-' are used in the so-called 'International Standard Identifier for Libraries and Related Organisations', a registration system for public libraries and record offices in countries around the world.

NL-HtBHIC	<i>Brabants Historisch Informatiecentrum</i>
NL-UtHUA	<i>Het Utrechts Archief</i>
PThU-U	<i>Protestantse Theologische Universiteit, Utrecht</i>
RUG	<i>Rijksuniversiteit Groningen</i>
RUL	<i>Rijksuniversiteit Leiden</i>
UBL	<i>Universiteitsbibliotheek Leiden</i>
VU	<i>Vrije Universiteit, Amsterdam</i>

### 3. Notes to Reader

Regarding the names of authors in sources mentioned in the footnotes, the following rules apply:

Name	The author of the article is known (because he has signed the article with his full name or initials)
[Name]	The article in question is published anonymously, but its author can be inferred from the context with absolute certainty (mainly editorials in opinion magazines)
[Name in:]	The person in question is paraphrased, quoted or referred to in an article written by someone else (mainly in reports of NPB and other meetings, and communiqués)
N.N. <sup>3</sup>	The author of the article is unknown or at least not known to me (mainly newspaper articles)

Articles published in journals prior to 1945 and articles published in daily newspapers, both before and after 1945, are referred to in the footnotes *in full* both the first time they are mentioned and every time thereafter. This is done, because some articles would otherwise have the exact same shortened form. Readers who want to check a reference mentioned in a footnote, would then not know to *which* article reference is made in that particular footnote. Moreover, given the amount of articles in journals and newspapers referred to in the footnotes, it would probably be asked too much of a reader to remember where exactly in this study an article is mentioned for the first time. Thus, for the sake of clarity and consistency, and as a ‘service’ to the readership, shortened forms are not used in reference to the articles mentioned in the fourth section of the bibliography.

Non-English names of periodicals and associations are translated into English between brackets *only* the first time they are mentioned.

Dutch terms for which no satisfactory English equivalents exist are *not* translated. For example, I consistently use the term ‘Dutch Reformed Church’ to refer to the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, but the terms ‘*evangelisch*’ and ‘*ethisch*’ to refer to specific theological-ecclesiological currents existing within the Dutch Reformed Church. Terms such as the latter are specified in English the first time they are used.

Words and phrases in languages other than English are written in italics. All quotes in languages other than English are translated by me into English in the main text and given in their original form in the footnotes.

The term ‘denomination’ is a translation of the Dutch noun ‘*kerkverband*’.

<sup>3</sup> The abbreviation ‘N.N.’ is not used in the footnotes. If an author of an article cannot be identified, only the title of the article in question is mentioned.

For the sake of consistency, the word ‘church’ is only capitalised in names of specific denominations (e.g.: the Dutch Reformed Church) and congregations (e.g.: the Austin Friars Church in London), not in reference to the church as institution in general or the entire body of Christians (e.g.: the institution of the church, the separation of church and state, the church of Christ).

The terms ‘modernist’ and ‘liberal Protestant’ as translations of the Dutch adjectives ‘*modern(-godsdienschtig)*’ and ‘*vrijzinnig-protestants*’ are used interchangeably throughout the text, although the latter is used more often in reference to the period after 1900.

The term ‘neo-Calvinist’ is used as an adjective of everything related to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*). The term ‘*gereformeerd*’ is not used, in order to avoid confusion with other denominations also carrying this term in their name.

To avoid confusion between ‘*hervormd*’ and ‘*gereformeerd*’, I specifically use the term ‘Dutch Reformed’ when meaning ‘*hervormd*’. There is only one exception: in all instances, the term ‘liberal Reformed’ is short for ‘liberal Dutch Reformed’, hence for ‘*modern-*’ or ‘*vrijzinnig-hervormd*’.

The term ‘Mennonite’ is a translation of the Dutch word ‘*doopsgezind*’.<sup>4</sup>

In the text, the original spelling of Dutch terms (indicated with a ■ above) is used, hence *Nederlandsche Christelijke Radio-Vereeniging* instead of *Nederlandse Christelijke Radiovereniging*.

When used in a general sense, which the context makes clear, masculine personal pronouns include their feminine counterparts. In those instances, ‘he’ should thus be read as ‘s/he’, etc.

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<sup>4</sup> Visser suggests using the term ‘Mennonites’ only in reference to “those groups that sought to remain loyal to the heritage of Menno Simons.” In the Netherlands, Simons (±1496-1561) was one of the early leaders of a movement originally referred to as ‘Anabaptists’, a movement in which infant baptism was rejected. Visser does not translate the term ‘*Doopsgezinden*’ (following English spelling conventions regarding names of religious groups, he uses a capital D) when referring to those groups within the Anabaptist branch of Protestantism that were open to reforms of Menno Simons’s intellectual heritage. If his suggestion were to be followed, the term ‘Mennonite’ should not be used in reference to modernist-minded nineteenth- and twentieth-century *doopsgezinden*. Nevertheless, it is (still) standard practice in English-language historiography on the latter to use the term ‘Mennonites’. Moreover, because all Dutch names of denominations are translated into English in this study (e.g. ‘Dutch Reformed’ for ‘*Nederlands-hervormd*’), the same is done in the case of *doopsgezinden*. Besides, as Visser himself remarks, the term ‘*doopsgezind*’ is “the official name of the Dutch branch of the global Anabaptist/Mennonite movement.” Using the term ‘Mennonite’ to refer to this Dutch branch of the international Mennonite movement in an English-language study thus seems to be perfectly legitimate. See: P. Visser, ‘Mennonites and Doopsgezinden in the Netherlands, 1535-1700’, in: J.D. Roth and J.M. Stayer (eds.), *A Companion to Anabaptism and Spiritualism, 1521-1700* (Leiden 2007), 299-345, there 299-300.







Dutch Reformed minister Johannes van Loenen Martinet (*central*) was editor-in-chief of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, a liberal Protestant opinion weekly, between 1869 and 1871, and of its successor *De Hervorming* between 1885 and 1913. In addition, as depicted here, he was editor-in-chief of the politically liberal opinion weekly *De Nieuwe Amsterdammer* in 1895 and 1896.

Source: 'Radicale journalistiek, of hoe men elkaar in de wielen rijdt', *Uilenspiegel* XXVIII.41 (25 January 1896), 164.

# INTRODUCTION

## 1. Modernising Christianity and Christianising Modern Society

“The press has been for a long time, and is becoming even more, one of the great forces that control the course of politics and society.”<sup>1</sup>

It might seem a provocation to start a study on the liberal or ‘modernist’ current within late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Dutch Protestantism with a quote from Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920). After all, Kuyper, the patriarch of neo-Calvinist orthodoxy, set himself up as one of the fiercest antagonists of liberal Protestantism. The content of this particular quote might even intensify the feeling that introducing this study by referring to Kuyper is a provocation, when one considers that Kuyper used the press to vehemently criticise liberal Protestants and to mobilise fellow orthodox countrymen against them. Yet, granting Kuyper the first words is not meant to be provocative. His awareness that the press had the potential to greatly influence political and social developments perfectly typifies the spirit of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the period with which this study deals and in which media scholar J.M.H.J. Hemels places the ‘golden age’ of the Dutch press.<sup>2</sup> As of the abolition of a special newspaper tax in 1869, the press took over the role of reading clubs, debating societies and gentlemen’s associations as the primary arena in which the battle of ideas was fought in the Netherlands.<sup>3</sup> It would continue to be so until the proliferation of the radio in the late 1920s.<sup>4</sup> Due to newspapers and magazines, differences of opinion within and between groups of Protestants could crystallise and simultaneously be brought to the attention of an immense amount of people all across the country, thereby largely contributing to the emergence of several loosely or more strongly organised movements. In the Dutch context, Neo-Calvinists formed one of these movements, modernists another.

When it came to the opportunities the press offered, liberal Protestants fully agreed with Kuyper. They also recognised that the press was a powerful instrument with which thousands of people could be reached and united in a common cause. Ever since the first vague contours of a liberal Protestant community became apparent in the late 1850s, the want of a modernist periodical therefore manifested itself. In 1858, C.P. Tiele (1830-1902), who would become one of the leading modernist theologians of his generation, took the initiative to found a weekly, entitled *Teekenen des Tijds* (*Signs of the Times*). Although he stated that his magazine did not side against orthodoxy, he could not hide his liberal Protestant sympathies.<sup>5</sup> Tiele surrounded himself with contributors who were all firmly committed to studying the Bible as any other historical document. Furthermore, he devoted a favourable review to fellow minister Conrad Busken Huet’s (1826-1886) controversial *Brieven over den Bijbel* (*Letters on the Bible*), in which the sacred character of Scripture was straightforwardly denied.<sup>6</sup> Tiele did not have much success:

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<sup>1</sup> “De pers was sinds lang, en wordt steeds meer, een der groote machten, die den gang van het politieke en sociale beheerschen.” Quoted from: J.M.H.J. Hemels, ‘De pers als “een der groote machten” ofwel het late gelijk van dr. Abraham Kuyper’, *De Negentiende Eeuw* XV.2 (1991), 53-69, there 53.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> As demonstrated in: J.M.H.J. Hemels, *De Nederlandse pers voor en na de afschaffing van het dagbladzegel in 1869* (Assen [1969]).

<sup>4</sup> R.L. Schuurmsma, *Jaren van opgang. Nederland 1900-1930* ([Amsterdam 2000]), 208.

<sup>5</sup> [C.P. Tiele], ‘De redactie aan den lezer’, *De Teekenen des Tijds* I.1 (1 October 1858), 1-2, there 1.

<sup>6</sup> C.P. Tiele, ‘Brieven over den Bijbel’, *Ibid.* I.30 (22 April 1859), 1-2; I.31 (29 April 1859), 1-2; I.32 (6 May 1859), 1-2; I.36 (3 June 1859), 1-2; I.37 (10 June 1859), 1-2.

a lack of readership forced him to discontinue his magazine as early as 1859. *Teekenen des Tijds* apparently came a bit too early: subscriptions to magazines were expensive, while liberal ideas had not yet penetrated church life firmly enough for a genuine modernist *movement* to come into existence. Ten years later, however, when such a movement had begun to emerge, some ministers in the region north of Amsterdam made a new attempt to publish a magazine disseminating modernist opinions. Thanks to the abolition of the newspaper tax, their *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* (*New Ecclesial Weekly*) did manage to attract a sufficient number of subscribers. As the magazine's title indicated, it was predominantly dedicated to church-related affairs – that is to say, to the justification of modernists' right to be in the church against orthodoxy's denial thereof.

After a couple of years, the title '*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*' was no longer satisfactory. From January 1873 onwards, the magazine would be called '*De Hervorming*' ('*The Reformation*'). In the first issue carrying the new name, then editors-in-chief B.C.J. Mosselmans (1830-1911) and J. van Gilse (1836-1917) gave an explanation. In the last decade, they noticed, modernists had been able to give their religious conceptions an ecclesial embedment and thus had no reason any longer to preoccupy themselves with justifying their presence in church life. Orthodox Protestants who still challenged modernists' right to be in the church were fighting a rearguard action; the further dissemination of liberal conceptions of God, Jesus and Scripture was simply unstoppable. And yet, liberal Protestants had no reason to feel fulfilled. "We want to go further and we want more," Mosselmans and Van Gilse exclaimed. What they wanted was to take up the sixteenth-century church Reformers' initial aspiration to bring about "the Kingdom of God, [...] a new earth filled with justice." The Reformers had dropped this aspiration for two reasons. First, to legitimise their cause, the Reformers had challenged the authority of the Roman Catholic Church by substituting it for the authority of Scripture. The biblical words had consequently become the sole sources of divine knowledge. Second, the endeavour to realise a new earth had been besmirched by excesses, particularly early Anabaptists' orgies of violence. As Mosselmans and Van Gilse believed, now the time had come to pick up the pursuit that the Reformers had failed to bring to completion.<sup>7</sup>

Why was the time ripe to do so? Because, as Mosselmans and Van Gilse argued, (the Christian) religion was at the root of all present-day issues. Of course, without them saying this out loud, the emergence of modern theology was in large part responsible for that. Since religion was at the root of all contemporary issues, the key to solving these issues lay in a purification of religion. To purify Christianity, the church and everything that went with it had to be reformed on the basis of modern-theological insights. Moreover, an end had to be made to the "ancient distinction and friction" between religion and human reason. Only then could true piety – that is, a religious faith based on Jesus's ethical principles and not on an idolisation of Jesus as divinely-humanly miracle maker – flourish and could its fruits – an awareness of ethical responsibility and charity – saturate society, "[so] that it might be well with the world."<sup>8</sup> A structural reformation of faith, church and society was needed, and by renaming their magazine, Mosselmans and Van Gilse demonstrated that it was their goal to contribute to this reformation.

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<sup>7</sup> "Wij willen verder en meer."; "...het 'Godsrijk', d.i. [...] de nieuwe aarde waar gerechtigheid woont." Quoted from: [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], 'Nieuwjaarsgroet', *De Hervorming* 1873-01 (2 January 1873), 1-2, there 1.

<sup>8</sup> "...aloude scheiding en tweespalt tusschen godsdienst en kennis..."; "...opdat het de wereld welga." Quoted from: *Ibid.* This last quote is a reference to Ephesians 6:3.

The content of the Christian faith thus had to be brought up-to-date in compliance with the state of contemporary scientific and scholarly knowledge, while the outward manifestations of Christianity – church structures and rituals – should be purged of all elements that were rooted in the supernatural world view to which modern-theological inquiry had given the deathblow. Simultaneously, society and culture should be permeated with the sense of duty and charity that were the consequences of ‘true’ piety. *True* piety could only be rooted in the message of Jesus, stripped of its miraculous aura by modern theology, instead of in veneration for a mythological God-man. In other words, Mosselmans and Van Gilse wanted the modernist movement to modernise Christianity and to permeate society with this modernised, non-supernatural Christianity, or, in short, to truly Christianise society.<sup>9</sup>

Mosselmans and Van Gilse were not the only ones who defined the cause of the modernist movement as such. Whereas modernists had delineated their movement as one within church life before the 1870s – which is reflected in the large amount of brochures they wrote to defend their historical and ethical right to be church members while renouncing creedalism –, they came to broaden the scope of their movement to society at large afterwards. The founding of the *Nederlandsche Protestantenbond* (Dutch League of Protestants or NPB) in 1870 largely contributed to that.

This voluntary association, created in reaction to the formation of an organisational front in orthodox circles, aimed at uniting all liberal Protestants within its ranks. Some even imagined that the NPB would be a prefiguration of the faith community of tomorrow, ultimately replacing the church. Identifying the NPB with the modernist movement as a whole, champions of the NPB expressed themselves in similar terms as Mosselmans and Van Gilse. According to the first regulations of the NPB, the association wanted “to preserve and further the free expression of individual Christian religious life in the churches” and “to stimulate the development of Christian life in individuals and families.”<sup>10</sup> In an 1871 brochure, Dutch Reformed minister J.F. Corstius (1819-1888) explained how this could be realised. Church regulations should be as limited as possible, containing only some elementary code of order, but certainly no references to creeds or prescriptions on the composition of religious services.<sup>11</sup> As orthodox fanaticism irrevocably resulted in “the decay of society,” religious life should be able to float without being doctrinally straitjacketed. The NPB aspired to “make society more truly free in the spirit of Christ,” in order for Christians to fully live up to Christ’s incitement to be “the salt of the earth” and thus to promote social welfare and popular development.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Compare the first editorial article of *De Hervorming* with that of the modernist-minded magazine *De Protestant*, issued between 1883 and 1887. Just as Mosselmans and Van Gilse, the editors of *De Protestant*, I. Hooykaas, A.P.G. Jorissen (1830-1905), H.C. Lohr and J.H. Maronier, had the “firm conviction that a good deal of what requires reformation in church and state, in society, schools and households will get [the reformation it requires] when those principles [modernist principles, TK] exert their influence more generally.” (“...vaste overtuiging, dat veel van ‘t geen nu in Kerk en Staat, in maatschappij, school en huisgezin hervorming behoeft, die zal vinden, wanneer die beginselen meer algemeen hun invloed doen gelden.”) Quoted from: ‘Wat wij willen’, *De Protestant* I.1 (6 January 1883), 1-2, there 1. See also: A.L. Molendijk, ‘De vervluchting van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland’, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* L (1996), 122-134, there 124, note 11.

<sup>10</sup> “...de vrije uiting van het persoonlijk christelijk geloofsleven in de kerkelijke genootschappen te handhaven en aan te moedigen.”; “...de ontwikkeling van het christelijk leven bij personen en in huisgezinnen bevorderen.” Quoted from: J.F. Corstius, *Het Witte Kruis of de Protestantenbond in Nederland* (Dokkum 1871), 17.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>12</sup> “...de verrotting der maatschappij...”; “...de maatschappij meer waarlijk vrij te maken door den geest van Christus...”; “...het zout der aarde...” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 4, 12, 17.

Three years later, recently abdicated Dutch Reformed minister W. Zaalberg (1835-1906) encouraged liberal-minded Protestants in the Overijssel town of Deventer to join the NPB by defining the association's objective as follows:

Being an association for public advancement in the sphere of religion and the church, [the NPB] wants to let many share in the blessed triumphs of science, applied to ethical-religious life. That way, it wants to contribute to the ennobling of our nation's existence in households and society as well as to the formation of a church community built upon the principles of free Protestantism – a church community that can again be the salt of society.<sup>13</sup>

Church – that is, the organisation of the Christian community of faith – and society both contained many obstacles that hindered people from believing on the basis of modern-theological insights, while only such a liberal belief could be beneficial to the common good. Church and society should therefore be reformed in such a way that these obstacles would no longer exist.

Enhancing the “free development of religious life,” as the slightly less church-oriented 1872 regulations of the NPB stated, meant what Zaalberg implied.<sup>14</sup> Religious life would only be able to develop in freedom if it was not kept in confinement by creeds, out-dated conceptions and rituals that had become hackneyed and that lacked any significance in the modern world view. Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for example, only had meaning in supernatural metaphysics, but modernists believed that modern theology had falsified a supernatural interpretation of Christianity once and for all. If the ontological basis and content of faith – that is, conceptions of God, Jesus and Scripture – were revised, then new forms ought to be created in which this faith could find concrete expression.

Not only the way in which the church and religious services were organised made it impossible for religious life to develop freely; so did society. There were many impediments that hindered the true Gospel message of deliverance from evil – individual imperfections and social wrongs –, detached from the belief in a miracle-making Jesus, from finding actualisation in society. Many people lacked education or were kept in a state of intellectual poverty by priests and orthodox ministers, who polluted their minds with dogmatic rigidity and a sense of helplessness when it came to improving their own lives – they were said to be sinners who were incapable of doing any good without being redeemed by Christ, after all. This restrained them from embracing liberal Protestantism, which could raise the standard of their spiritual, ethical and even material life. Modern society was not a place wherein justice was ubiquitous. All kinds of social evils, ranging from alcohol abuse to a lack of domesticity and from sanctimoniousness to pauperisation, kept people from engaging themselves in spiritual and ethical matters and thus prevented religious life from developing freely.

Why was the modernist movement so convinced that church and social life had to be reformed? Because it was a true offspring of the nineteenth century in the sense that it was driven

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<sup>13</sup> “Op godsdienstig en kerkelijk gebied eene maatschappij tot nut van het algemeen wil hij de gezegende veroveringen van de wetenschap, toegepast op het zedelijk-godsdienstig leven, het deel doen worden van velen. Alzoo wil hij medewerken aan de veredeling van ons volksbestaan in huis en maatschappij en aan de vorming eener kerkgemeenschap, gebouwd op de beginselen van het vrije protestantisme, eene kerkgemeenschap, die weër het zout der maatschappij kan zijn.” Quoted from: W. Zaalberg, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenbond* (Deventer 1874), 15.

<sup>14</sup> “...de vrije ontwikkeling van het godsdienstig leven...” Quoted from: J. Steur, ‘Archief van het hoofdbestuur van den Nederlandschen Protestantenbond, 1870-1925’, in: *Inventarissen van Rijks- en andere archieven, van Rijksweg uitgegeven, voor zoover ze niet afzonderlijk zijn afgedrukt* IV (The Hague 1933), 140-158, there 142.

by an eschatological, evolutionary and optimistic belief in progress. Technological advancements encroached deeply on society, while scientific discoveries and a scholarly accumulation of knowledge decisively stamped intellectual life. History became an academic discipline, telling the narrative of a world that had gradually become better and that was moving towards ultimate perfection. For Christianity to still be significant in the age to come, it should not be out of step with social, cultural and scholarly developments and should accordingly be 'improved'. Modernists regarded this to be crucial, because of the strong link they saw between religion and ethics. If Christianity would no longer be persuasive and acceptable for man living in the modern age, modernists thought, this would have devastating consequences for public morals, for Christianity was the cement of a civilised society. Liberal Protestants had disagreements over the exact relationship between religion and morality, but none of them doubted that the two were in one way or another intertwined.

Modernists were certainly not the only ones in the late nineteenth century who felt that if Christianity and society would not be reformed (and in such a way that a continuous cross-fertilisation between the two could take place), then the gap between them would eventually become unbridgeable, which would be a disaster for both. In the context of Dutch Protestantism, for example, Kuyper and his orthodox Calvinist supporters, who called themselves 'gereformeerden' and are generally referred to in English as 'neo-Calvinists' or 'Kuyperians', had similar aims to bring Reformed orthodoxy 'in rapport' with the present day and to 're-Christianise' society.<sup>15</sup> They even made the same claim as modernists to complete the work of the sixteenth-century Reformers, albeit with a different justification, and with a different objective in mind.<sup>16</sup>

As the editors of *De Hervorming* and the NPB were both devoted to letting the modernist movement fulfil its vocation to modernise Christianity and Christianise modern society, it was no surprise that the NPB decided to purchase *De Hervorming* in 1875. The magazine continued to

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<sup>15</sup> See, e.g.: J. Hendriks, *De emancipatie van de gereformeerden. Sociologische bijdrage tot de verkenning van enige kenmerken van het huidige gereformeerde volksdeel* (Alphen aan den Rijn 1971), 94-156, 212; A.A. van der Schans, *Kuyper en Kersten. IJveraars voor herkerstening van onze samenleving* (The Hague and Leiden 1992), 129; J. Veenhof, 'Geschiedenis van theologie en spiritualiteit in de gereformeerde kerken', in: M.E. Brinkman (ed.), *100 jaar theologie. Aspecten van een eeuw theologie in de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (1892-1992)* (Kampen 1992), 14-95; J.P. Stoop, "Om het volvoeren van een christelijke staatkunde". *De Anti-Revolutionaire Partij in het interbellum* (Hilversum 2001); D.Th. Kuiper (J. de Bruijn, J.G.M. de Bruijn and G.J. Schutte eds.), *Tussen observatie en participatie. Twee eeuwen gereformeerde en antirevolutionaire wereld in ontwikkelingsperspectief* (Hilversum 2002), 112-115. See also: C.M. van Driel, 'Modernisme', in: G. Harinck, H.J. Paul and B.T. Wallet (eds.), *Het gereformeerde geheugen. Protestantse herinneringsculturen in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2009), 223-232, there 223; T.E.M. Krijger, 'Was Abraham Kuyper een fundamentalist? Het neocalvinisme langs de fundamentalistische meetlat', *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* LXIX.3 (2015), 190-210, there 203-206.

<sup>16</sup> Briefly put, Neo-Calvinists believed that all teachings denying or nuancing the Trinity, the total depravity of mankind, and God's absolute power to predestine some to go to heaven and others to be lost for all eternity – hence all modernist teachings – and all church practices that were rooted in such teachings, undermined the vitality of Christianity. Reformed church life should accordingly be purged of all of these teachings and practices by reconstructing it on a strictly doctrinal Calvinist basis. However, Calvin had lived in an age that was very different from modern times. Kuyperians therefore acknowledged that Calvinist thinking could not do without contextualisation. At the same time, they disappointingly saw society moving in such a direction that the absolute sovereignty of Christ the King over all spheres of life would not be honoured. Neo-Calvinists therefore aspired after a 'Christianisation' of society, or rather a 'Calvinisation' – they wanted to permeate society with a revitalised Calvinism "until this nation will once again bow to God" ("tot weer dat volk voor God zich buigt"). Quoted in: *Kuyper-Gedenkboek 1907. Bevattende een overzicht van de feestviering op 29 October 1907 ter gelegenheid van den zeventigsten verjaardag van prof.dr. A. Kuyper, oud-minister van Binnenlandsche Zaken, te 's-Gravenhage, benevens een verzameling van tal van couranten-artikelen uit binnen- en buitenland, dat jubileum betreffende* (The Hague 1908), 232, 265.

exist until 1934. Within these 59 years, especially before the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, the words of Mosselmans and Van Gilse, Corstius and Zaalberg were constantly reiterated. The bulk of speeches given at NPB meetings and opinion articles published in *De Hervorming* were about the deficiencies of church life, the shortcomings of social life, or both. In fact, while also referring to liberal Protestants' claim to be the true heirs to the sixteenth-century Reformation, the title '*De Hervorming*' should be read as a concise programme of what the modernist movement tried to establish. There was a consensus in the NPB that church life and social life had to be reformed. Yet, in what way and to what extent this reformation should be pursued was no open-and-shut case. Should liberal Protestants try to change existing practices within the churches, or should they leave the institution of the church behind altogether and create an entirely new community of faith? Should liberal Protestantism influence society directly or indirectly; that is, should liberal Protestants proactively set their hands to a reconfiguration of society in organised form, or should they merely make people aware of social wrongs without organising social work themselves? Moreover, should priority be given to the reorganisation of church life or to the improvement of social life? There were vivid discussions on these questions, to which different answers were given by different persons at different times.

This study deals with the development of the modernist movement in the Netherlands between, broadly speaking, 1870 and 1940, by analysing the discussions held in modernist circles on the question of how Christianity should be modernised and how society could be permeated with this modernised Christianity. As the last paragraph has indicated, the reformation of church and social life was the goal to which the modernist movement, as represented by the Dutch League of Protestants, aspired. The modernist movement literally took shape while trying to realise this aim. The aforementioned discussions are therefore the ideal focal point of a study that wants to comprehend the development of this movement. For reasons explained below, a close reading of *De Hervorming* is at the heart of this study, although the analysis is certainly not limited to this magazine alone.

## 2. Terminology and Periodisation

It is hard to give a straightforward definition of 'Protestant modernism' or 'liberal Protestantism', as those who identified themselves as 'modernists' rejected creeds wherein the conceptual content of faith was precisely formulated. There was no Christology, no ecclesiology and no soteriology that can be labelled as *the* modernist 'building blocks'. 'Modernism' is an umbrella-term for a wide variety of viewpoints that, in essence, have one characteristic in common: they all deviate in one way or another from viewpoints that are designated as 'orthodox'. 'Modernism' and 'orthodoxy' are problematic terms. A juxtaposition of both terms suggests that 'orthodoxy' was essentially anti-modern and that 'modernism' was receptive to contemporary developments in culture and society by definition. As this study shows, this dichotomy is in many ways misleading.

The Dutch context has some terminological peculiarities. Protestants outside the Netherlands with whom Dutch modernists sympathised usually called themselves 'liberal' in the English-, French- and German-speaking world. It was, contrariwise, not common for Dutch modernists to depict themselves as '*liberaal*'. In a church context, this adjective was mostly used to refer to the early nineteenth-century adherents of a moderately rationalistic, hardly dogmatic,

supernaturalist interpretation of the Bible.<sup>17</sup> In a more general sense, the usage of the term ‘liberaal’ was restricted to the political arena, denoting the still influential political philosophy that believes in keeping state intervention in individual, social and economic life as minimal as possible.<sup>18</sup>

A second terminological peculiarity is that the term ‘modernist’ gradually lost its appeal in favour of the untranslatable label ‘vrijzinnig’ from 1900 onwards, although the term ‘vrijzinnig’ had also been used beforehand and the term ‘modern’ continued to be used until well into the twentieth century. In this study, ‘modern’ and ‘vrijzinnig’ are both translated as ‘modernist’ and ‘liberal Protestant’, and used interchangeably. The reason for this is twofold. First, ‘modernist’ and ‘liberal’ can be seen as exact synonyms, as terms that both refer to the school of thought that emerged in Protestantism in the nineteenth century and that was epistemologically based on a historical-critical reading of the Bible. Before the emergence of this school of thought, there was no ‘liberal Protestantism’. Second, ‘modernism’ can be seen as the nineteenth-century manifestation of a broader ‘liberal’ (‘vrijzinnige’) current – ‘liberal’ referring to a critical attitude towards accepted conceptions of God, Jesus and Scripture –, that is as old as Protestantism itself, or even as old as Christianity as a whole. This is the vision J. Lindeboom (1882-1958) puts forward in his three-volume *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme (History of Liberal Protestantism)*, published between 1929 and 1935.<sup>19</sup> Either way, ‘liberal’ and ‘modernist’ can safely be used as interchangeable terms in the period with which this study deals, the years between 1870 and 1940.

It is important to make a distinction between ‘modern theology’ and the ‘modernist movement’.<sup>20</sup> The first emerged in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and consisted of academia-based divines who studied the Bible by making use of natural scientific theories and philological and historical methods. As a result, these theologians came to reject

<sup>17</sup> E.g.: J. Vree, ‘The Dominating Theology within the Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk after 1815 in its Relation to the Secession of 1834’, in: G. Harinck and J.L. Krabbendam (eds.), *Breaches and Bridges. Reformed Subcultures in the Netherlands, Germany and the United States* (Amsterdam 2000), 33-47, there 37; N.H. Bijleveld, *Voor God, Volk en Vaderland. De plaats van de hervormde predikant binnen de nationale eenwordingsprocessen in Nederland in de eerste helft van de negentiende eeuw* (Delft 2007), 85.

<sup>18</sup> Note that in the United States, the word ‘liberal’ denotes a progressive political position. Liberals in the United States tend to be more in favour of state intervention than non-liberals.

<sup>19</sup> R. Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland* (Kampen 2006), 10; A.L. Molendijk, ‘Vrijzinnigheid ruim opgevat. Johannes Lindebooms “Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme”’, in: M.P.A. de Baar and M. van Dijk (eds.), *Herinnering en identiteit in het vrijzinnig protestantisme. Opstellen aangeboden aan prof.dr. E.H. Cossee bij zijn afscheid als hoogleraar* (Hilversum 2009), 15-26, there 16. Chapter 1 deals with Lindeboom’s vision in more detail.

<sup>20</sup> This distinction was made in modernist circles. See, e.g.: ‘Wat wij willen’, *De Protestant* I.1 (6 January 1883), 1-2, there 1; ‘De richtingen in de protestantsche kerken XVI’, *Ibid.* V.6 (5 February 1887), 2-3, there 2; A. Kuenen, *Gedachtenisrede in de vergadering van moderne theologen, 7 April 1891: 1866-1891* (Leiden 1891), 8-9; A.M. Brouwer, *De moderne richting. Eene historisch-dogmatische studie* (Nijmegen [1912]), 41; K.H. Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland* (Haarlem 1922), 110; [H.C. Lohr], ‘Mededeelingen en berichten’, *De Hervorming* 1875-49 (9 December 1875), 3-4, there 3; ‘Nederlandsch Protestantenvond – Brielle’, *Ibid.* 1878-12 (23 March 1878), 2; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Onze leestafel – Een bonte bundel’, *Ibid.* 1882-48 (2 December 1882), 3; L. Knappert, ‘Nog eens de moderne theologie’, *Ibid.* 1889-29 (20 July 1889), 113-114, there 114; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – “Fata morgana”’, *Ibid.* 1900-51 (22 December 1900), 395-396; J. Herderschee, ‘Ingezonden stukken – “De modern-godsdienstige richting”’, *Ibid.* 1906-48 (1 December 1906), 381; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De vergadering van moderne theologen’, *Ibid.* 1908-18 (2 May 1908), 140-141, there 140; M.A.P., ‘Ingezonden stukken – “Moderne richting”, “moderne theologie”’, *Ibid.* 1908-42 (17 October 1908), 335; F.E. van Santen, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Tijd en eeuwigheid’, *Ibid.* 1917-05 (3 March 1917), 34; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Geestelijke stromingen in den bond’, *Ibid.* 1919-46 (15 November 1919), 207-208, there 207.



supernaturalism – the belief that Jesus performed miracles and that God can intervene in the world while surpassing the laws of nature – and brought forth new views on the authorship and dating of Biblical texts. The modernist movement manifested itself outside academia and propagated a non-supernaturalist Christian world view in an attempt to preserve Christianity as a powerful cultural force in the age to come. A reformation of church and social life was therefore deemed necessary. The modernist movement came into being in the third quarter of the nineteenth century and consisted of ministers, laymen, and most practitioners of modern theology, who participated in it by giving lectures outside academia and by writing in non-scholarly journals.<sup>21</sup> ‘Modernism’ encompasses both modern theology and the modernist movement. This study concerns itself only with the latter.

It is not anachronistic to hang the development of the Dutch modernist movement between 1870 and 1940 on the endeavour to reform church and social life, as expressed by Mosselmans, Van Gilse and other early modernists. As stated before, this endeavour was generally seen as the *raison d’être* of the modernist movement not only in the 1870s, but also during the entire period prior to the First World War. Afterwards, the ambitions of the modernist movement decreased; voices proclaiming the ‘Christianisation’ of society fell silent. The blow that the First World War delivered to the cultural optimism of many modernists was responsible for this, as well as processes within the modernist movement itself and within society at large. Nonetheless, the hope to influence church life and social life in such a way that liberal Protestant ideas could find actualisation continued to be vivid in the interwar period. A good example thereof is the (failed) transformation of *De Hervorming* into a magazine that targeted leading non-modernist intellectuals and decision makers in 1918.

The reason to begin this study in 1870 is twofold. First, it was in this year that the Dutch League of Protestants was founded. The NPB, a national organisation with local branches, could justifiably claim to have a central position in the Dutch modernist movement. It grew from 1,400 members and 26 branches in 1871 to nearly 20,000 members and 175 branches in 1900. These numbers would more or less stabilise in the decades following 1900.<sup>22</sup> The NPB wanted to be significant both within and outside of church life. It targeted people who were already confirmed liberal Protestants as well as people who did not (or not yet) have modernist sympathies. The denominational composition of its membership was varied, as modernists could be found in the *Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk* (Dutch Reformed Church), including the Francophone Walloon Reformed congregations that were part of this church denomination, the *Remonstrantsche Broederschap* (Remonstrant Brotherhood), the *Algemeene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit* (General Mennonite Society) and the *Evangelisch-Luthersche Kerk* (Evangelical Lutheran Church), while some did not belong to any of these churches. Although it is impossible to determine exact numbers – the Reformed, Lutheran and Mennonite churches did not only have modernist-minded members, whereas membership figures of these churches do not say anything about individuals’ level of orthodoxy –, it is safe to state that in the period

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<sup>21</sup> One prominent exception was J.H. Scholten, who, contrary to the other ‘patriarch’ of modern theology in the Netherlands, C.W. Opzoomer, did not actively participate in the modernist movement. While Opzoomer was one of the founding fathers of the NPB, Scholten never lectured at NPB meetings and wrote an article in *De Hervorming* only once. See: J.H. Scholten, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Uit de geschiedenis der proponentsformule’, *Ibid.* 1884-06 (9 February 1884), 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> An overview is given in appendix B.

of study at least three-quarters of all liberal Protestants in the Netherlands belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>23</sup> Most leading liberal theologians were involved with the NPB in some way or another, while several ministers became modernist opinion leaders thanks to the platform the NPB offered them. Though the modernist movement did not completely coincide with it, the NPB did cover the whole spectrum of liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands. It thus provides a representative image of the development of the Dutch modernist movement as a whole.

Second, this study begins in 1870, because this year is generally referred to in historiography as the starting point of the ‘modernisation’ of the Netherlands.<sup>24</sup> As Dutch historian P. de Rooy paradigmatically formulates, “the modernisation [of Dutch society] began to truly take off and to be really felt by Dutch people in their daily lives from approximately 1870 onwards.”<sup>25</sup> ‘Modernisation’ is, just as (Protestant) ‘modernism’, a term that cannot be straightforwardly defined. It moreover carries a certain normative connotation, as it is the basic concept of ‘modernisation theories’ that link it to a rather eschatological interpretation of history, postulating that religion and especially institutional religion will ultimately and necessarily fade away. While acknowledging the flaws of such theories, German theologian F.W. Graf suggests that the processes these theories collectively call ‘modernisation’ do have value as a frame against which the evolution of church and theology in the last two centuries can be explained. These processes are the following. The first process Graf mentions is capitalist industrialisation, which raises social friction and socio-economic class differences. Second, he points to structural changes in the sphere of politics, including the collapse of the estate-based society that was rooted in medieval feudalism, and the reorganisation of political institutions on a more democratic basis. Moreover, the political order came to be legitimised by the idea that citizens form a society on the basis of a ‘social contract’ in which they have voluntarily given up some of their individual freedoms to a government ruling in the name of all, the formation of political parties, the development of parliaments chosen by a growing number of citizens, and the acknowledgement of individual civil rights. A third process that is a constitutive element of ‘modernisation’ is the drifting apart of state and society. As a result, ‘modern’ social life becomes more diverse and divided into numerous autonomous segments. Although Graf does not use the term himself, ‘structural differentiation’ is the label often given to this process. Fourth, Graf speaks of the development of all kinds of new, individualistic life

<sup>23</sup> In 1927, Evangelical Lutheran minister D. Drijver even estimated that seven out of eight modernists belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church. See: D. Drijver, ‘Binnenland’, *Ibid.* 1927-03 (1 March 1927), 21-22, there 22. Attempts have been made to determine the exact number of liberal Protestants solely within the Dutch Reformed Church. See, e.g.: H. Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart van Nederland. Omvang en geografische spreiding van de godsdienstige gezindten vanaf de Reformatie tot heden* (Assen 1992), 109; H. te Winkel, ‘De “vrijzinnige richting” binnen de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk. Een kwantitatieve studie naar haar invloed tussen 1925 en 2000’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXX.67 (December 2007), 40-59.

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g.: T. van Tijn, ‘Op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd. Nederland omstreeks 1870’, in: J.A. Van Houtte et al. (eds.), *Algemene geschiedenis der Nederlanden X. Liberaal getij, 1840-1885* (Utrecht and Antwerp 1955), 288-313; J.H. van Stuivenberg, ‘Economische groei in Nederland in de negentiende eeuw: een terreinverkenning’, in: I.J. Brugmans and W.J. Wieringa (eds.), *Bedrijf en samenleving. Economisch-historische studies over Nederland in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Alphen aan den Rijn and Brussel 1967), 195-225; J.C.H. Blom, ‘Nederland sinds 1830’, in: J.C.H. Blom and E. Lamberts (eds.), *Geschiedenis van de Nederlanden* (Rijswijk 1993), 308-366, there 321.

<sup>25</sup> “Dat wil zeggen dat vanaf ongeveer 1870 daadwerkelijk ook alom de modernisering ging toeslaan en mensen dat in hun persoonlijk leven gingen merken.” Quoted from: P. de Rooy, “Dat de evenaar noch naar links, noch naar rechts doorzwikte”. De confessionelen en de moderne natie’, in: K.U. Becker (eds.), *Maatschappij en Nederlandse politiek: historisch en vergelijkend* (Amsterdam 1998), 181-203, there 200.

styles. Finally, he refers to the ‘privatisation’ of religion, meaning that the churches lose their spiritual monopoly, and that the religious landscape comes to offer people a plurality of ‘options’ from which they can freely choose to make sense of their own lives.<sup>26</sup> These were processes with which the modernist movement, itself being a ‘product’ of modernisation, was confronted in its endeavour to detach Christianity from a supernatural, ‘pre-modern’ world view and to permeate modern society with this modernised Christianity.

The Second World War, into which the Netherlands were dragged in 1940, is not only a ‘natural’ caesura in history in general that allows this study to end in 1940; after all, it has deeply affected the way in which Protestantism and Christianity as a whole developed in the second half of the twentieth century, epitomised by the persistently raised question of how ‘theology after Auschwitz’ could and should make sense of a total war that had brought out the worst in mankind and had smashed the Earth into smithereens. It is also a perfect year to end this study for a more specific reason. During the Second World War, a process of interfactional rapprochement took off in the Dutch Reformed Church, the denomination that not only had the most members of all Dutch Protestant churches, but also included the grand majority of all Dutch *liberal* Protestants. Forced by the German occupation, and building on initiatives that had been set up in the 1930s, the different factions within the Dutch Reformed Church came to find a way to peacefully co-exist. Working papers were drafted with the intention to lay new church foundations. Although there were many concerns in liberal Reformed circles about the rather orthodox formulations in these creed-like documents, only a tiny minority decided to stand aloof, leading to the founding of the Dutch Reformed *Zwinglibond* (which is internationally referred to as the ‘Dutch Unitarian Association’) in 1948.<sup>27</sup> Most Reformed liberals put their enthusiasm about orthodox fellow church members’ willingness to find a *modus vivendi* before their concerns. The process of interfactional rapprochement was sealed with the enactment of a new church order in 1951. Dutch Reformed governing bodies no longer pretended that the Dutch Reformed Church was a monolithic unity. Rather, they recognised the existence of several inner-church currents or, in their organised form, ‘*modaliteiten*’ (‘modalities’), of which ‘*vrijzinnigheid*’ was one. Church policy would no longer be adrift, pleasing orthodoxy at one moment and favouring liberalism at another, depending on the circumstantial composition of the synod. From now on, it aimed to appease the differences that existed between (and within!) currents by treating all modalities as equal partners and by granting all modalities a good deal of freedom to organise themselves as they pleased. The Dutch Reformed Church, formerly paralysed by fierce factional struggles, presented itself with new zeal as the church for and of the entire Dutch nation, as the moral compass and religious soul of the Dutch people. Stirred up by this zeal, many Reformed liberals came to put their membership of the Dutch Reformed Church before their liberal persuasion. Moreover, due to the influence of the dialectical theology of Karl Barth (1886-

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<sup>26</sup> F.W. Graf, ‘Moderne Modernisierer, modernitätskritische Traditionalisten oder reaktionäre Modernisten? Kritische Erwägungen zu Deutungsmustern der Modernismusforschung’, in: H. Wolf (ed.), *Antimodernismus und Modernismus in der katholischen Kirche. Beiträge zum theologiegeschichtlichen Vorfeld des II. Vatikanums* (Paderborn etc. 1998), 67-106, there 81. Bendel also argues that modernisation theories might be controversial, but nonetheless continue to have value as analytical tools. See: R. Bendel, ‘Vertriebenenseelsorge. Problemanzeigen auf dem Hintergrund der aktuellen Forschungslage’, in: R. Bendel and S.M. Janker (eds.), *Vertriebene Katholiken. Impulse für Umbrüche in Kirche und Gesellschaft?* (Münster 2005), 27-36, there 32.

<sup>27</sup> R.M. Nepveu, *50 jaar Zwinglibond, 1948-1998* (Odoorn [1998]), 7; E.H. Cossee, ‘Dutch Involvement in the IARF’, in: *Centennial Reflections. International Association for Religious Freedom, 1900-2000* (Assen 2001), 39-41, there 41.

1968), which was not only absorbed by moderate orthodoxy, but even percolated into liberal Protestantism,<sup>28</sup> the boundaries between the liberal right-wing and the orthodox left-wing became blurred, resulting in the emergence of a dominant centre movement that somewhat misleadingly got the name ‘*middenorthodoxie*’. The year 1940 thus marked the beginning of a fundamental change in the position of liberalism within the biggest Protestant church in the Netherlands.<sup>29</sup>

A last reason to begin in 1870 and end in 1940 is that this timeframe almost exactly coincides with the period in which *De Hervorming* was published. A systematic and integral analysis of this magazine has laid the foundation of the research on which this study is based. Starting as ‘*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*’ in 1869, *De Hervorming* was issued between 1873 and 1934. From late 1875 until its discontinuance, it was owned by the Dutch League of Protestants. In the late nineteenth century, *De Hervorming* was the only Dutch opinion weekly that was edited in a modernist spirit. Because it was linked to the NPB, it targeted modernists who attended different church denominations, as well as modernist-minded people who did not go to church or have any church membership at all. The NPB allowed its editors to frankly express their personal beliefs – which they did, sometimes leading to outright controversy, often leading to complaints. At the same time, however, they generously provided space to others who disagreed with them.<sup>30</sup> Articles were written by theologians, ministers and, to a lesser extent, laymen with various ecclesial backgrounds and diverse opinions, and dealt with a broad range of topics. *De Hervorming* shows which were the thematic preoccupations of Dutch liberal Protestants at certain moments in time. It mirrors the development of the modernist movement, which it also itself influenced.

### 3. *Status Quaestionis*: The Dutch Modernist Movement in Historiography

Compared to other religious groups and currents, the Dutch modernist movement has received only limited attention from historians. The narrative of so-called ‘*verzuiling*’ (‘pillarisation’) that has long been dominant in Dutch historiography has largely contributed to this. According to this paradigm, Dutch society was divided into four institutionalised, ideology-based parallel infrastructures or ‘*zuilen*’ (‘pillars’) of orthodox Protestants (of which Abraham Kuyper’s supporters or ‘neo-Calvinists’ were the flag-bearers), Roman Catholics, socialists, and people who preferred ‘*algemeene*’ or ‘*neutrale*’ (‘general’ or ‘non-partisan’) organisations that were not based on any ideology, between the 1870s and 1970s.<sup>31</sup> Many of the latter had a politically liberal orientation. Liberal Protestants’ relationship to pillarisation was rather complex; nearly all of them were against it, although they did begin to set up an incomplete institutionalised

<sup>28</sup> For the reception of Barth’s work in the Netherlands, particularly among liberal Protestants, see: H.J. Adriaanse, ‘De invloed van Karl Barth op het theologiseren in remonstrantse kring’, in: S. Bouman and E.J. Kuiper (eds.), *Remonstrantse toetsen. Ervaringen met de theologie, 1934-1984* (Utrecht 1984), 157-174; S. Hennecke, *Karl Barth in den Niederlanden I. Theologische, kulturelle und politische Rezeptionen (1919-1960)* (Göttingen 2014), 63-71, 223-234.

<sup>29</sup> H.J. Kater, ‘Inleiding’, in: *De positie van de vrijzinnige hervormden in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (Assen 1955), 1-23, there 6-9; Klooster, *Het vrijzinnige protestantisme in Nederland*, 76-82.

<sup>30</sup> A brief analysis of the editorial policy of *De Hervorming* is given in: T.E.M. Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”. “De Hervorming” als toonaangevend en representatief persorgaan van de modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland (1873-1934)’, *Tijdschrift voor Tijdschriftstudies* XXXIII (2013), 37-58.

<sup>31</sup> Part of the pillarisation paradigm is the idea that the years between 1870 and 1970 were an exceptional period in Dutch history, when religious involvement was more intense than it had ever been before and than it would be thereafter. See: F.A. Groot, ‘Gewapende vrede. Ontwikkelingen op levensbeschouwelijk gebied’, in: Th.A.H. de Nijs and E. Beukers (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Holland IIIb. 1795 tot 2000* (Hilversum 2003), 485-546, there 497-498.

social infrastructure of their own in the 1920s. Combined with their lack of clear group characteristics, they have therefore been largely ignored.

Although the pillarisation paradigm has been nuanced in recent years,<sup>32</sup> historiography dealing with Christianity in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Netherlands still tends to fixate on neo-Calvinism, institutionally concentrated in the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands), and on Roman Catholicism.<sup>33</sup> In part, this is a legacy of pillarisation. Separately organising themselves in all spheres of life, neo-Calvinists and Roman Catholics had their own academies, the Free University in Amsterdam and the Catholic University in Nijmegen respectively, which helped to create a vivid tradition of partisan writing on and recording of every detail of their own history. Even though these universities have severely loosened their commitment to the principles on the basis of which they were founded, they still produce a massive amount of studies on the history of neo-Calvinism and Roman Catholicism. These institutes accommodate orthodox Protestant and Catholic documentation centres, while there is no such centre for Dutch liberal Protestantism.<sup>34</sup> Historical brochures, periodicals and other documents written by or dealing with modernists are, in general, poorly filed. Of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, for example, only a few copies have survived the ravages of time. In order to integrally read all complete volumes of *De Hervorming*, it is necessary to visit several public and academic libraries and archives.<sup>35</sup> Contemporary Dutch liberal Protestants tend to show less interest in the history of their religious ancestry than the present-day descendants of twentieth-century neo-Calvinists and Roman Catholics.<sup>36</sup> Thus, historical modernist sources are not only insufficiently recorded, but also scarcely consulted. A final reason that explains why the modernist movement has been and still tends to be overlooked is that it was numerically small in comparison to the well-organised mass movements of neo-Calvinists and related orthodox Protestants, and Roman Catholics. Because they were less recognisable as a group, modernists' social and cultural influence is moreover harder to notice in the context of Dutch society and culture in general.

The Dutch modernist movement became the object of serious historical study in the early 1900s. Commemorative writings on both the history of the 'assembly of modern theologians', an annual meeting of divines who discussed historical-critical theology and religion-related cultural

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<sup>32</sup> E.g. in: P. de Rooy, 'Zes studies over verzuiling', *BMGN CX.3* (1995), 380-392; J.C.H. Blom, 'Vernietigende kracht en nieuwe vergezichten. Het onderzoeksproject verzuiling op lokaal niveau geëvalueerd', in: J.C.H. Blom and J. Talsma (eds.), *De verzuiling voorbij. Godsdienst, stand en natie in de lange negentiende eeuw* (Amsterdam 2000), 203-236; P. de Rooy, 'Voorbij de verzuiling?', *BMGN CXVI.1* (2001), 45-57; P.H. van Dam, *Staat van verzuiling. Over een Nederlandse mythe* (Amsterdam 2011); P.H. van Dam, 'Voorbij verzuiling en ontzuiling als kader in de religiegeschiedenis', in: P.H. van Dam, J.C. Kennedy and J.W.F. Wielenga (eds.), *Achter de zuilen. Op zoek naar religie in naoorlogs Nederland* (Amsterdam 2014), 31-53.

<sup>33</sup> For example, *Achter de zuilen* aims to look at what was going on 'behind the pillars' after the Second World War, but, remarkably enough, almost completely overlooks liberal Protestants.

<sup>34</sup> In spite of its general name, the focus of the *Historisch Documentatiecentrum voor het Nederlands Protestantisme (1800-heden)* (Historical Documentation Centre for Dutch Protestantism (1800 to the present day)), located at the Free University in Amsterdam, is undeniably on the history of orthodox Protestantism, or, even more specific, on neo-Calvinism. See also: J. Exalto, 'Van zwartekousenkerken naar biblebelt. De opmars van de bevindelijk gereformeerden in de historiografie', in: P.H.A.M. Abels et al. (eds.), *Terug naar Gouda. Religieus leven in de maalstroom van de tijd* (Zoetermeer 2014), 97-116, there 112.

<sup>35</sup> Krijger, 'Een vrijzinnige "meneer"', 41-42; T.E.M. Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web. De netwerkfunctie van de Nederlandse Protestantenvbond binnen het vrijzinnig-protestantisme op lokaal, nationaal en internationaal niveau', in: C.M. van Driel and J.M. Houkes (eds.), *Het vrijzinnige web. Verkenningen naar vrijzinnig-protestantse netwerken (1850-1914)* (Zoetermeer 2014), 39-66, there 40.

<sup>36</sup> See also: K.M. Witteveen, *Modern geloven. Een korte schets van de geschiedenis van de VVH* (Maarssen 1995), 7.

issues, and the Dutch League of Protestants, had already been published in 1891 and 1895 respectively,<sup>37</sup> but these were just little brochures that did not pretend to be exhaustive or analytical.<sup>38</sup> Alongside the fact that enough time had elapsed to critically look at the formative phase of modernism, there was a specific reason for historical studies taking the modernist movement as their central topic to be published at the beginning of the twentieth century. A current of ‘malcontents’ had emerged within the modernist movement, which expressed its dissatisfaction with modernism in its initial shape without mincing matters. Those who did not share this dissatisfaction felt the need to defend ‘old-school modernism’ by chronicling its achievements, in an attempt to instil ‘malcontents’ with more appreciation for the first generations of modernists. In an apologetic manner, J. van Loenen Martinet (1840-1918), the then editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming* and an ardent defender of ‘old-school modernism’, stated in 1896 that now the “old guard, which has witnessed the emergence of the ‘modernist movement’ in this country” was dying down, “a proper history of the first years of the modernist movement would be of interest [and] would also be enlightening for the many who pass a misjudgement [thereof].”<sup>39</sup> In the same issue of *De Hervorming*, classicist N.J. Beversen (1860-1932) made a similar plea:

Gradually, a generation has grown up and a generation is growing up that starts to become a stranger in the history of the modernist movement. [...] It appears to me that the efforts of the most significant participants of the battles that modernists have fought with the orthodox and with each other are – I will not say: totally neglected, but not assessed at their true value, and that unfamiliarity with these efforts often leads to wrong judgements of the dead – and the living, which makes a painful impression. Writings [...] that deal with a piece of history of the modernist movement [and] stimulate to make ourselves acquainted with various raised matters as well, are pre-eminently fit to fill this hiatus in our knowledge.<sup>40</sup>

Dutch Reformed minister J. Herderscheê (1850-1929) was the first to take up the gauntlet.<sup>41</sup> His 1904 *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland* (*The Religious Modernist Movement in the Netherlands*), which modernist critics blamed for being incomplete and too ‘dry’, was

<sup>37</sup> Kuenen, *Gedachtenisrede*; [I. van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond, 1870-1895* (Amsterdam [1895]).

<sup>38</sup> Colenbrander deals with the modernist movement in the second volume of his *Beknopte geschiedenis van het Christendom*, yet not as his main subject. See: B.W. Colenbrander, *Beknopte geschiedenis van het Christendom II* (Zutphen 1894), 251-320.

<sup>39</sup> “De oude garde, die de opkomst van de ‘moderne richting’ hier te lande beleefde, sterft langzamerhand weg. [...] Een eigenlijke geschiedenis van de eerste jaren der moderne richting zou belangwekkend zijn, leerzaam ook voor velen die in onzen tijd vaak zoo onjuist haar beoordeelen.” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Knappert’s lezingen’, *De Hervorming* 1896-06 (8 February 1896), 22-23, there 23.

<sup>40</sup> “Zoo langzamerhand is er een geslacht opgegroeid en groeit er een geslacht op, dat in de geschiedenis der moderne richting vreemdeling begint te worden. [...] Het wil mij wel eens toeschijnen, of de arbeid der meest beteekenisvolle figuren uit den strijd dien modernen met orthodoxen en modernen onderling streden, – ik wil niet zeggen: gansch en al veronachtzaamd, maar toch niet op de juiste waarde geschat wordt, en dat dikwijls onbekendheid met dien arbeid een verkeerd oordeel doet vellen over de dooden en – de levenden, wat zeer pijnlijk aandoet. Geschriften [...] waarin een stuk geschiedenis der moderne richting gegeven wordt, dat tevens prikkelt om nog eens van verschillende aangeroerde kwesties zich op de hoogte te stellen, zijn uiterst geschikt om bovenbedoelde leemte in onze kennis aan te vullen.” Quoted from: N.J. Beversen, ‘Onze leestafel – “Levensbericht van Isaac Hooykaas”’, *Ibid.* 1896-06 (8 February 1896), 23-24.

<sup>41</sup> Herderscheê had become a minister in 1873 and had thus not witnessed the rise of the modernist movement himself. He decided to write a history of the modernist movement nonetheless, as no one else took the effort to do so. See: [J. Herderscheê], ‘Repliek’, *Ibid.* 1905-24 (17 June 1905), 186-187, there 187.

followed by three other similarly descriptive and chronicle-like publications.<sup>42</sup> The authors of these booklets acknowledged that the modernist movement had not fulfilled its earliest adherents' high expectations, but nonetheless implied that they cherished these expectations.<sup>43</sup>

The first to put the history of Dutch modernism on the academic agenda was K.H. Roessingh (1886-1925). Already a 'rising star' in liberal Protestant circles before the completion of his doctoral studies, Roessingh became one of the most important advocates and apologists of malcontentesque 'right-wing modernism' afterwards.<sup>44</sup> While his 1914 PhD dissertation solely dealt with early modernists' theological theorems, he broadened his themes and time frame in a 1922 publication.<sup>45</sup> In it, Roessingh sketches the development of modernism, including both modern theology and the modernist movement, as one of triumph in its formative phase, between 1850 and 1870, followed by a period of disappointment and even despair. Modernism, he notices, had come into being as a quest for a new synthesis between the Gospel and culture, but the course it had taken had actually brought the task of finding such a synthesis far out of its horizon: in the early 1920s, theological unity among modernists was long gone, while the modernist movement was still convalescing from the strong tendency within late nineteenth-century modernism to disparage the institution of the church, which had severely weakened modernists' position in the ecclesial domain and had had a devastating effect on liberal Protestant congregational life.<sup>46</sup> Of early modernists' expectations, none had come true. A similar, slightly defeatist narrative is told in M.C. van Mourik Broekman's (1878-1945) 1925 study on liberal Christian spiritual life, W.R.M. Noordhoff's (1898-1972) 1933 dissertation on liberal Protestant church life, and J. Lindeboom's third and concluding volume on the history of liberal Protestantism, published in 1935.<sup>47</sup>

In a brochure that had already been published in 1915, Van Mourik Broekman puts forward a suggestion that can help to make sense of the evolution of the modernist movement. He compares modernist and orthodox styles of preaching from a psychological point of view. The former, he puts forward, only appealed to people with an individualistic attitude of mind, while the latter bred a mass mentality.<sup>48</sup> This gives rise to the hypothesis – only a hypothesis, as Van Mourik Broekman does not substantiate his argument with an analysis of the content of modernist sermons and modernist discourse – that modernism was *intrinsically* unable to appeal to a mass audience.

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<sup>42</sup> J. Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland* (Amsterdam 1904); 'Leestafel – "De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland"', *De Hervorming* 1904-40 (1 October 1904), 316; W. Zaalberg, 'Van de geschiedenis der moderne richting', *Ibid.* 1905-17 (29 April 1905), 131-132, there 131; H. Oort, 'Pro', in: H. Oort and Ph.J. Hoedemaker, *De modern-godsdienstige richting* (Baarn 1906), 1-15; T. Cannegieter, *De moderne richting* (Baarn 1908); Brouwer, *De moderne richting*.

<sup>43</sup> Cannegieter, *De moderne richting*, 48.

<sup>44</sup> His treatise on J.H. Scholten as a dogmatic theologian, written as entry for an academic competition held by the University of Amsterdam, had been awarded with a gold medal in 1911. See: K.H. Roessingh, *Over Jan Hendrik Scholten als dogmaticus, beschouwd in de lijst van zijn tijd*; UBL BPL 2825:1.

<sup>45</sup> His dissertation is titled '*De moderne theologie in Nederland. Hare voorbereiding en eerste periode*'.

<sup>46</sup> Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 145-161.

<sup>47</sup> M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *Vrijzinnig Christelijk geloofsleven* (Leiden [1925]); W.R.M. Noordhoff, *Het godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven in het Nederlandsch vrijzinnig protestantisme. Een sociaal-psychologische studie* (Lochem 1933); J. Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme III. Sedert 1870* (Assen 1935).

<sup>48</sup> M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *De orthodoxe en moderne geloofsprediking uit psychologisch oogpunt vergeleken* (Zaltbommel 1915). He elaborated on mass psychology in: *Het karakter der massa* (Arnhem 1926).

Though not focusing on the modernist movement as such, J.P. Kruijt's (1898-1975) 1933 dissertation on churchless Dutch citizens is also worth mentioning here, as it implies why the modernist movement has not managed to increase its numerical strength over time. Contrary to the authors mentioned above, Kruijt was not actively participating in the modernist movement at the time. Raised by parents who had exchanged the Mennonite faith of their childhoods for an anarcho-syndicalist philosophy of life, he would only become a liberal-minded member of the Dutch Reformed Church during the Second World War.<sup>49</sup> Observing that the number of people without church membership was highest in regions where liberal religious ideas had deeply penetrated church life, Kruijt suggests the existence of a certain correlation. Given this study's focus, his suggestion gives rise to the following interpretation. In certain regions, the modernist movement had successfully created some sense of urgency that church and society needed to be reformed. Yet, its criticism on the existing church life might have paradoxically given people whose participation in church life had already been low a final push to effectively leave the churches. Moreover, its dissatisfaction with certain social practices might have made it easier for people to join the emerging organised labour movement. Yet, Kruijt hastens to say that modernism was not causally connected to a drop in church membership figures or the rise of political socialism; it had only contributed to both of these phenomena in combination with specific regional circumstances.<sup>50</sup>

In the second half of the twentieth century, academic research dealing with the history of the modernist movement became very rare. Not a single dissertation was published that took modernism as its main subject. In these decades, *vrijzinnigheid* as a separately organised branch of Protestantism seemed to have become somewhat superfluous, as ideas that beforehand only circulated in modernist circles began to filter through to the *mainstream* of the Dutch Reformed Church, and even came to be held within the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the bastion of Kuyperian orthodoxy. Historiography written by modernists themselves reiterates Roessingh's account. Liberal Reformed minister L.J. van der Kam (1908-1997) is one such example, but he goes a step further. Noticing every Sunday that liberal congregations were far more poorly attended than orthodox ones, he boldly asserts in a 1966 brochure that Abraham Kuyper was right to depict modernism as a 'fata morgana' in 1871. Instead of preserving Christianity for generations to come, modernists had preached the intelligentsia out of the Dutch Reformed Church and had not been able to win back blue-collar workers for church life.<sup>51</sup> Less harsh in its depiction of modernist history is the 1989 publication *Tussen geest en tijdgeest* (*Between Spirit and the Spirit of the Age*), comprising chapters written by several liberal-minded historians and theologians. It concentrates on the development of twentieth-century liberal Protestant theology, churches, and organisations on the periphery of church life. The authors recognise the gradual marginalisation of the modernist movement, but do not seem to fully grasp why this marginalisation had to occur.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> E. Jonker, 'Kruijt, Jakob Pieter (1898-1975)', *Biografisch woordenboek van Nederland* IV (The Hague 1994), 274-276, there 275.

<sup>50</sup> J.P. Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland. Haar verbreiding en oorzaken: proeve eener sociografische verkenning* (Groningen and Batavia [1933]), 180, 247-249, 326.

<sup>51</sup> L.J. van der Kam, *Modernisme: bloei en verval ... en verder* ([Blij 1966]), 10-11, 22-24; 'Ds. Van der Kam: modernisme heeft kerken leeg gepreekt', *Leeuwarder Courant* CCXV.212 (10 September 1966), 22.

<sup>52</sup> B. Klein Wassink and Th.M. van Leeuwen (eds.), *Tussen geest en tijdgeest. Denken en doen van vrijzinnig protestanten in de afgelopen honderd jaar* (Utrecht 1989).



In a lecture held at the annual conference of the *Zwinglibond* in 1986, theologian R.M. Nepveu contributed to the historiography of Dutch modernism in a remarkable way by profiling the modernist movement as an “emancipation movement.”<sup>53</sup> Reading history through the lens of the now highly controversial secularisation thesis, and following K.H. Roessingh’s notion that there is an ideal ‘modern man’ who manifests himself more strongly as time progresses, Nepveu sees in history the endeavour of this ‘modern man’ to liberate himself from all restraints imposed upon him by church and religion – the powers ruling social, cultural and intellectual life – that prevent him from fully flourishing. Nepveu labels this endeavour ‘secularisation’. ‘Modern man’, in Roessingh’s words, recognises that God only works through the human mind, opposes a supernaturalist world view, relativises the special position of Biblical Israel in world history and the singularity of Christianity by looking at the former as one nation among many, and at the latter as one religion among others, historicises the verbatim Biblical texts, emphasises the significance of the here and now, and firmly believes in mankind’s intrinsic capacity to do good. Nepveu sums all this up in the term ‘desacralisation’. ‘Secularisation’ thus leads to ‘desacralisation’.<sup>54</sup> According to Nepveu, modern man’s self-liberating or emancipatory endeavour found expression in the nineteenth century in liberalism in politics, in innovative methods and theories in science and philosophy, and in modernism in church and religion. Modernism was a “radicalisation of the process of secularisation,” as it desacralised the Christian world view and church practices in an unprecedented way, was attuned to the aim of political liberalism to maximise personal freedom, and gave people an incentive to become non-practising members of their church or to give up their church membership altogether.<sup>55</sup> This radicalisation began to curb in the late nineteenth century. Modernists lost a good deal of influence in the Dutch Reformed Church as well as their blind faith in the natural sciences. They became pessimistic, resulting in a turn towards moderate orthodoxy. Last, modernists had difficulty making themselves visible in society, wedged as they were between anti-church liberals and anti-religious socialists.<sup>56</sup>

In a 1996 article, theologian A.L. Molendijk reiterates the ‘classic’ account of Dutch modernist history as one of rapid progress in the 1850s and 1860s – “palmy days, [when] liberal Protestants could claim to be the representatives of the Protestant mainstream”<sup>57</sup> – followed by ongoing decline. He advances the thesis that liberal Protestantism ‘evaporated’, because the process of pillarisation gave the deathblow to its ideal of a broad ‘big tent’ church or ‘*volkskerk*’.<sup>58</sup> This ideal, Molendijk contends, made modernists hesitant to organise themselves as a group – they “believed they were representing the public good and tried to integrate the existing [social and religious] pluriformity into an overarching whole.”<sup>59</sup> When pluriformity became institutionalised in Dutch society around 1900 – the process of pillarisation, fuelled by the

<sup>53</sup> “...emancipatiebeweging...” Quoted from: R.M. Nepveu, *De opkomst van het modernisme in Nederland als voorbeeld van de radicalisering van een emancipatieproces* (s.l. [1987]), 1. See also: R.M. Nepveu, ‘Modernisme vroeger en nu’, *Civis Mundi* XXVII.2 (1988), 48-52, there 49.

<sup>54</sup> Nepveu, *De opkomst van het modernisme in Nederland*, 2-6.

<sup>55</sup> “...radicalisering van het secularisatieproces...” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 8-10. The quote is on p. 9.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>57</sup> “...in hun bloeitijd konden de vrijzinnigen menen de vertegenwoordigers van de hoofdstroom van het protestantisme te zijn.” Quoted from: Molendijk, ‘De vervluchtiging van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland’, 124.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 123. The terms ‘*volkskerk*’ and ‘pillarisation’ are defined in more detail in chapters 4 and 9 respectively.

<sup>59</sup> “...de vrijzinnigen en de liberalen meenden het algemene te representeren en poogden de bestaande pluriformiteit binnen een overkoepelend kader te integreren...” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 129.

opposite ideal of segregation –, the ideal of a *volkskerk* as such an ‘overarching whole’ became extremely remote from social reality. Other groups, most notably neo-Calvinists, Roman Catholics and social democrats, were far better organised and, as Roessingh famously addressed in a 1923 lecture, internally less fragmented than the modernist community.<sup>60</sup> As a result, liberal Protestantism as an organised movement – Molendijk rightfully devotes a separate analysis to liberal Protestant *theology* – became marginalised over the course of the twentieth century.<sup>61</sup>

Theologian-sociologist D.J. Bos devotes a small part of his 1999 dissertation on the development of nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed ministers as a professional group to the history of Dutch modernism. In his book, Bos only looks at its manifestation within the Dutch Reformed Church, not in other church communities, nor in society at large. Due to his scope, he does not say much about modernists’ gradual loss of influence in the Dutch Reformed Church, which became apparent towards the end of the nineteenth century. As others before him,<sup>62</sup> he attributes this to the right all Dutch Reformed men were given in 1867 to have a say in the election of ministers, elders and deacons in their own congregations. Orthodox groups more often than not prevailed in church council elections, as they had the largest and best organised following.<sup>63</sup> Bos’s dissertation does shed new light upon the rapid rise of modernism in the 1850s and 1860s. Modernist-minded ministers did not have to be afraid to be ‘excommunicated’ when they preached their ideas from their pulpits, due to the absence of regulated church discipline in doctrinal matters. Moreover, contrary to their colleagues abroad, ministerial candidates in the Dutch Reformed Church did not have to go through a probationary period after finishing their academic studies. They were not ‘chaperoned’ by an older minister in their first congregation and could thus preach modernist ideas, which they had been taught at the university, without having to respect the pre-modernist theology of an older generation. Because of its scholarly and even scientific pretensions, modernism exerted quite some attraction on Dutch Reformed ministers. It perfectly linked up with a tendency among the latter to provide their profession with a ‘learned’ cachet in order to preserve their social prestige in a period in which the state put an end to Dutch Reformed privileges, to be taken seriously by academic professors, and to distinguish themselves from both orthodox ‘Secessionist’ ministers, who had left the Dutch Reformed Church in 1834 and subsequent years, and Roman Catholic priests, who had gained a judicial position equal to that of Protestant pastors in 1848. Finally, the rise of modernism coincided with the emergence of an articulate middle class. Modernist ministers respected and nourished middle-class people’s decisiveness to make up their own minds: they actively involved their congregation in theological controversies. Moreover, middle-class people wanted to be treated on equal terms, including in the church. Modernists’ view on the relationship between ministers and their congregations met this wish, as it was, according to Bos, profoundly egalitarian.<sup>64</sup>

As historian D.J. Wolffram noticed in 2009, “religious modernism in the Netherlands has long been a rather neglected phenomenon in historiography. Yet, [...] a catch-up effort is

<sup>60</sup> K.H. Roessingh, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Eenheid en organisatie van het vrijzinnig protestantisme’, *De Hervorming* 1923-18 (5 May 1923), 138-141; 1923-19 (12 May 1923), 146-147; 1923-20 (19 May 1923), 154-156.

<sup>61</sup> Molendijk, ‘De vervluchtiging van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland’, 122, 129-131, 134.

<sup>62</sup> E.g.: Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 146-147; J.N. Bakhuizen van den Brink et al., *Handboek der kerk-geschiedenis IV. De kerk sedert de zeventiende eeuw* (Leeuwarden 1985), 192; Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart*, 108.

<sup>63</sup> D.J. Bos, *In dienst van het Koninkrijk. Beroepsontwikkeling van hervormde predikanten in negentiende-eeuws Nederland* (Amsterdam 1999), 327.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 259-260, 304, 359.

going on.”<sup>65</sup> Indeed, to the handful of publications dealing with aspects of the history of Dutch liberal Protestantism that were printed in the decades before 2000, new ones have been added at a much faster rate in the early twenty-first century. Alongside articles in journals and a couple of monographs, three volumes, containing contributions from various scholars,<sup>66</sup> have recently been published. One of these volumes demonstrates that the bonds of friendship, kinship and matrimony existing among the first generation of modernists have largely contributed to a swift spread of modernist ideas and the emergence of an organised modernist movement.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, a small albeit, compared to the second half of the twentieth century, spectacularly increased number of dissertations on modernist history has been written in the last fifteen years.<sup>68</sup> Most of these studies deal with one protagonist of Dutch modernism,<sup>69</sup> leaving little room for a broader

<sup>65</sup> “*Het godsdienstige modernisme in Nederland was lange tijd een wat verwaarloosd fenomeen in de geschiedschrijving. [Er] wordt [...] echter aan een inhaalslag gewerkt.*” Quoted from: D.J. Wolffram, ‘Recensies – “God van vooruitgang” en “Schermen in de schemering”’, *BMGN CXXIV.1* (2009), 124-127, there 124.

<sup>66</sup> De Baar and Van Dijk (eds.), *Herinnering en identiteit*; L. Kenis and E.G.E. van der Wall (eds.), *Religious Modernism in the Low Countries* (Leuven 2013); Van Driel and Houkes (eds.), *Het vrijzinnige web*.

<sup>67</sup> The volume in question is: *Het vrijzinnige web*.

<sup>68</sup> The abbreviations between square brackets refer to the universities where these dissertations were defended.

A. le Coq, *Wat vlied’ of bezwijk’*. *Het vrijzinnige kerklied in Nederland, 1870-1973* ([RUG] Kampen 2005); C.M. van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren. Het strijdbaar leven van theoloog-politicus B.D. Eerdmans (1868-1948)* ([RUL] Kampen 2005); T.R. Barnard, *Van ‘verstoten kind’ tot belijdende kerk. De Remonstrantse Broederschap tussen 1850 en 1940* ([RUL] Amsterdam 2006); M.F. Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang. De popularisering van het modern-theologische gedachtegoed in Nederland (1857-1880)* ([RUL] Hilversum 2007); E.A. Postma, *Dilettant, pelgrim, nar. De positie van C.W. Mönnich in cultuur en theologie* ([PTHU-U] Delft 2008); A. de Vos, *Voorwaarts en niet vergeten. Leven en denken van Gerardus Horreüs de Haas* ([RUG] Zwolle 2008); K.J. Holtzapffel, *Een vrijzinnige kijk op de laatste dingen. Over het eschatologische element in de vrijzinnige protestantse theologie van de twintigste eeuw, in het bijzonder bij de remonstranten K.H. Roessingh, H.J. Heering en G.J. Heering* ([RUL] Gorinchem 2009); M.A.G. de Harder, *Albertinus van der Heide (1872-1953). Rode dominee tussen pastoraat en parlement* ([RUG] Kampen 2011); F. Pitstra, *Ontelbare enkelvoudens. Dr. Anne Mankes-Zernike (1887-1972): een biografie* ([RUG] Zoetermeer 2014). P. Post, *Geschiedenis van het doopsgezinde kerklied (1793-1973). Van particularisme naar oecumeniciteit* ([VU] Hilversum 2010) should also be mentioned in this list, as modern theology had a profound influence on the Dutch Mennonite community and the majority of Mennonites identified themselves as ‘modernists’. Post renders account thereof in his dissertation.

<sup>69</sup> The same goes for other recent publications dealing with the history of Dutch modernism, including: Th.A. Fafié, ‘Dr. H.A. van Bakel als Haarlems predikant’, *De Hoeksteen* XIII (1984), 212-223; H.J. Adriaanse (ed.), *Karel Hendrik Roessingh. Theoloog op het brekspunt van de tijd* (Utrecht 1987); H. Noordegraaf, *Henri van den Bergh van Eysinga, 1868-1920. Revolutionair, predikant en volksopvoeder* (Zutphen 1991); H. Noordegraaf, ‘F.W.N. Hugenholtz als voorganger van de Protestantenbond in Schiedam’, *Holland* XXIII (1991), 29-44; M.J. van Diggelen, ‘Albertus Bruining (1846-1919). Intellectualist tussen oud- en rechts-modernisme’, in: J.C.H. Blom (ed.), *Een brandpunt van geleerdheid in de hoofdstad. De Universiteit van Amsterdam rond 1900 in vijftien portretten* (Hilversum 1992), 29-52; E.H. Cossee, “‘Zoo wij iets sloopen, het is niet de godsdienst’”. Cornelis Petrus Tiele (1830-1902) als apologet van het modernisme’, in: D.Th. Kuiper et al. (eds.), *Jaarboek voor de Geschiedenis van het Nederlands Protestantisme na 1800 I* (Kampen 1993), 17-33; E. Verhoef, *W.C. van Manen. Een Hollandse radicale theoloog* (Kampen 1994); H. Noordegraaf, ‘M.C. van Wijhe. Een rode dominee uit Vught’, in: J. van den Eijnde (ed.), *Vught vanouds* (Vught 1995), 153-171; W. Koole, ‘Everhard Dirk Spelberg (1898-1968). Een leven gewijd aan de omroep’, in: K.H.F.M. Dibbets (ed.), *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis VI. Biografische schetsen* (Amsterdam 1995), 237-257; E.H. Cossee, ‘A.D. Loman en S. Hoekstra Bzn., illustere dissenters op de bres voor het modernisme’, in: A.G. Hoekema and S.E. Hof (eds.), *Illustere dissenters. Aspecten van de positie der Nederlandse lutheranen en doopsgezinden* (Zoetermeer and Woerden 1996), 71-93; J. Trapman, ‘Allard Pierson en zijn afscheid van de kerk’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XIX.45 (December 1996), 15-27; J. van Sluis, ‘Herman Bakels (1871-1952) en het godsbewijs vanuit de theepot’, *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks* XXIII (1997), 119-132; H. Noordegraaf, *Revolutionair predikant en religieus bezieler. A.R. de Jong (1883-1970)* (Gorinchem 1998); J. Exalto, “‘Dit koninkrijk tartende oorlogsbedrijf’”. Het christen-antimilitarisme van de rechts-modernist G.J. Heering (1879-1955)’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXI.49 (December 1998), 23-43; D. Jansen, ‘Ds. Adriaan Hendrik van der Hoeve. Spiritist of alleen maar vrijzinnig en eigenzinnig?’, *Fryslân* V.2 (July 1999), 21-22; A.L. Molendijk, ‘The Heritage of Cornelis Petrus Tiele (1830-1902)’, *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* LXXX.1 (2000),

meta-level, interpretative discussion on causes that can explain why the modernist movement took a completely different turn, in both church and society, than its originators envisioned. A dissertation that does not focus on only one theologian or minister is M.F. Buitenwerf-van der Molen's 2007 study on the efforts the first generation of modernists made to popularise their views. Hardly taking account of developments in church and society at large, she depicts modernists as being a 'countermovement', which "renewed the Christian faith in a radical way."<sup>70</sup>

Wolffram identifies what he calls a 'catch-up effort' – which should not be exaggerated; the magnitude and growth of historiography on liberal Protestantism still pales before the enormity and annual aggrandisement of historiography on orthodox Protestantism – as propelled by historian E.G.E. van der Wall,<sup>71</sup> but there is at least one other, more fundamental, explanation to give for it. The nuancing of the pillarisation paradigm, referred to above, has brought more firmly into historians' horizon groups and cultural phenomena that tended to be overlooked. If a theatre play were to be written on Dutch nineteenth- and twentieth-century history, 'pillarised' communities will undoubtedly have the lead roles. Present-day

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78-114; Th.A. Fafié, 'H.J. Toxopeüs en het vrijzinnig lutheranisme in Breda', in: P.H.A.M. Abels (ed.), *Van tweeën één. Kerk en West-Brabant door de eeuwen heen* (Delft 2001), 231-255; C.M. van Driel, 'Eenheid over alle scheids-muren heen. B.D. Eerdmans (1868-1948) als vrijzinnig-protestants leider in de kerkelijke strijd', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXIV.55 (December 2001), 49-73; E.H. Cossee and H.D. Tjalsma (eds.), *Geloof en onderzoek. Uit het leven en werk van C.P. Tiele* (Rotterdam 2002); P.L. Slis, *L.W.E. Rauwenhoff (1828-1889). Apologeet van het modernisme* (Kampen 2003); D. Jansen, "'Een persoonlijk voortbestaan...". Ds. Albertinus van der Heide en de parapsychologie', *De Vrije Fries* LXXXIII (2003), 179-200; D. Jansen, 'Zowel pelgrim als harpenaar. Uit het leven van Hilbrandt Boschma: de evangelist van Ruurlo', *Bijdragen en Mededelingen van de Vereniging Gelre* XCV (2004), 227-252; J. Trapman, "'Een daad van zelfbehoud". Allard Piersons brochure "Aan zijne laatste gemeente" (1865) en de reacties hierop', in: F.G.M. Broeyer and D.Th. Kuiper (eds.), *Is 't waar of niet? Ophefmakende publicaties uit de 'lange' negentiende eeuw* (Zoetermeer 2005), 192-214; D. Jansen, "'Een stofopjagend gezet". Louis Adrien Bähler: "Het 'christelijke' barbaendom in Europa" (1903)', in: *Ibid.*, 284-303; H. Noordegraaf, *P. Eldering (1868-1954). Een radicaal sociale predikant in de Remonstrantse Broederschap* (Gorinchem 2006); A.F.U. Braakman, *"Heimwee naar het Koninkrijk". Leven en werk van Gerrit Jan Heering* (Gorinchem 2007); J. Trapman, 'Anton Gerard van Hamel (1842-1907). Van Waals predikant en voorstander van een "atheïstisch christendom" tot de eerste hoogleraar Frans in Nederland', *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXXI.4 (2007), 256-272; J.K. Loman, 'Leven en werk van A.D. Loman', *Documentatieblad Lutherse Kerkgeschiedenis* XXXVI (2008), 34-44; J.K. Loman, 'A.D. Loman als predikant, hoogleraar en publicist', *Ibid.* XXXVII (2009), 2-21; E.H. Cossee, *Willem Muurling (1805-1882). Een Groninger wordt modern* (Groningen 2009); R. Klooster, 'Dr. Cornelis Hille Ris Lambers. Een opmerkelijke dienaar van God in Jorwerd', in: De Baar and Van Dijk (eds.), *Herinnering en identiteit*, 55-66; D. Jansen, *Een kunstenaar op de kansel. Ds. J.J. Meyer (11 oktober 1878 – 18 november 1956)* (Enkhuizen 2010); F. Pitstra, "'Daar ik altijd meer algemeen vrijzinnig georiënteerd was gebleven, dan speciaal doopsgezind". De vorming van het eigenzinnige vermanerschap van Anne Zernike (1887-1972)', *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks* XXXV/ XXXVI (2010), 441-467; R. Hartmans, H. Noordegraaf and R.E. van der Woude, 'Willem Banning (1888-1971). Opvoeder van het volk', in: P.E. Werkman and R.E. van der Woude (eds.), *Bevlogen theologen. Geëngageerde predikanten in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Hilversum 2012), 287-315; Th.A. Fafié, 'Levensbericht van de lutherse predikant Dirk Drijver (1879-1946)', *Documentatieblad Lutherse Kerkgeschiedenis* XLI (2013), 3-45; M. Brolsma, 'Gerardus Hendricus van Senden, de Eerste Wereldoorlog en het verlangen naar een religieuze regeneratie van de Europese cultuur', in: E. Koops and H.H.M. van der Linden (eds.), *De kogel door de kerk? Het Nederlandse christendom en de Eerste Wereldoorlog* (Soesterberg 2014), 259-275; K. Douwes, 'Eerder gids dan aanvoerder. Het vrijzinnig leiderschap van Hendrik Tjakko de Graaf (1875-1930)', *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXXVII.81 (December 2014), 40-60; A. Schaake, *De eenzame strijd van Johannes Tenthoff. Eén van de eerste rooie dominees en predikant in Hoorn van 1888 tot 1913* (Hoorn [2015]); D. Jansen, *Rood, maar met mate. Biografie van ds. A.H. van der Hoeve (1870-1943)* (Assen 2016).

<sup>70</sup> "De modernen vernieuwden het christelijk geloof op radicale wijze." Quoted from: Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 180. See also: Wolffram, 'Recensies', 125.

<sup>71</sup> Already in a 1999 academic lecture, Van der Wall hinted at turning the history of modernism into one of her main research subjects in the years to come. See: E.G.E. van der Wall, *Het oude en het nieuwe geloof. Discussies rond 1900* (Leiden 1999).

playwrights shall, however, lard their storyline with many more acts depicting what was going on outside of pillarised society than their twentieth-century colleagues would have done.

Despite the central position within the modernist movement for which the NPB destined itself, handbooks on Dutch religious or Protestant history barely mention the NPB,<sup>72</sup> as they primarily focus on Protestant orthodoxy. Since the establishment of the Dutch League of Protestants in 1870, its history has been narrated in brochures published by the NPB itself, often on the occasion of a jubilee,<sup>73</sup> and looked at from a more scholarly point of view in only a handful of academic studies. Most of the latter, however, do not take the NPB as their focal point<sup>74</sup> – rather, they deal with it insofar as it has played any role in the life of a leading modernist,<sup>75</sup> or as part of a general overview of the institutional development of liberal Protestant church communities.<sup>76</sup> The history of local NPB branches is chronicled in a number of commemorative booklets, issued by these branches themselves, and a tiny quantity of other publications.<sup>77</sup> The reasons mentioned

<sup>72</sup> E.g.: O.J. de Jong, *Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis* (Nijkerk 1972), 349, 368; J. van Eijnatten and F.A. van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis* (Hilversum 2005), 273; G. Harinck and L.G.M. Winkeler, ‘De negentiende eeuw’, in: H.J. Selderhuis (ed.), *Handboek Nederlandse kerkgeschiedenis* (Kampen [2006] 2010), 603-734, there 678.

<sup>73</sup> Corstius, *Het Witte Kruis*, 7-10; *Doel en werkkring van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond* (Amsterdam 1885); [Van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond, 1870-1895*; A.H. van der Hoeve, *Het werk van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond* (Zaltbommel [1911] 1917), 3-8; H.U. Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond van 1870 tot 1920. Rede, uitgesproken te Utrecht den 26<sup>sten</sup> October 1920, ter gelegenheid van het gouden feest van den bond* (Groningen [1921]); A.H. van der Hoeve, *Wegwijzer naar en in den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond* (s.l. [1925]); B.D. Eerdmans, *Kerk en kerkgaan XIV. De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond* (Huis ter Heide [1930]); J.A. de Koning et al., *Doel en werk van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond* ([Nijmegen 1938]), 5-9; G.D. Boerlage, *De Nederlandse Protestant Bond* (The Hague [1954]), 1-5; A.A.H. Hoytink, *100 jaar N.P.B.: 1870-1970* (s.l. [1970]); P.J.C. Korver, ‘125 jaar NPB: kerk of vereniging?’, in: E. Delvaux-den Boer et al. (eds.), *Balans in beweging. Contouren van een vrijzinnige geloofsgemeenschap: NPB 1870-1995* (Zwolle 1996), 1-22.

<sup>74</sup> Exceptions are: D. Jansen, ‘“Kan er uit Nazareth iets goeds komen?” “Onze Krans” te Dokkum: een opmaat van de Nederlandse Protestantenvond’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XIX.44 (June 1996), 1-18; C.M. van Driel, ‘“De Hervorming”. Geschiedenis van het zwaard en zorgenkind van de Nederlandse Protestantenvond’, in: A.A.I.M. Mikkers and Ch.E. Smit (eds.), *Tussen Augustinus en atheïsme. Kerkhistorische studiën 2006* (Leiden 2006), 136-152; Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’; Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’.

<sup>75</sup> E.g.: Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*; Pitstra, *Ontelbare enkelvoudens*.

<sup>76</sup> E.g.: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme III*; Klein Wassink and Van Leeuwen (eds.), *Tussen geest en tijdgeest*.

<sup>77</sup> AMEIDE • C.M. Jonker, *Macht en armoede aan de rivier. Ameide en Tienhoven 1870-1940* ([Ameide] 2010), 61-64, 212-215; BEILEN • *Open Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB afdeling Beilen, 1897-1997* (s.l. [1997]); BENNEKOM • A. Brzesowsky et al., *In een ommezien. 50 jaar N.P.B. Bennekom* (Wageningen 1987); J.G. Schuitemaker, A. Nooij and T. Hoekstra, ‘Bennekomse kerkgebouwen – De Ontmoetingskerk van de Ned. Protestanten Bond’, *De Kostersteen* XCIII (2005), 7; BLOEMENDAAL • *50 jaar Nederlandse Protestantenvond afdeling Bloemendaal, 1918-1968* (s.l. [1968]); BRUMMEN • W. Overmars and L. Overmars, *100 jaar NPB Brummen. 100 jaar vrijzinnig in beweging* (s.l. 2006); DE BILT / BILTHOVEN • *Welkom in de Woudkapel: een kennismaking. Uitgegeven ter gelegenheid van het 80-jarig jubileum van ‘De Woudkapel’, afdeling De Bilt/Bilthoven en omstreken van de landelijke vereniging Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB* (s.l. 2003); DINXPERLO • J. Aalbers, *NPB Dinxperlo 100 jaar, 7 maart 1987* (s.l. [1987]); H.H. Agterhof, ‘100 jaar afdeling Nederlandse Protestantenvond te Dinxperlo’, *Contactorgaan A.D.W. van de Werkgemeenschap Aalten, Dinxperlo en Wisch* XXV (1987), 52-56; DOORN • *Vijftig jaar Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB Doorn en omstreken, 1946-1996* (s.l. [1996]); H. van Hartesveldt-Bruggeman, *Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB afdeling Doorn en omstreken. Geschiedenis van de Luden-Kapel* (s.l. 2011); EDE • D. Westerbeek and W. Steursma, *100 jaar Ericakerk Ede* (s.l. 2012); EIBERGEN • B. Meulenkamp, *Honderd jaar Ned. Prot. Bond Eibergen, 1889-1989* (Eibergen 1989); ELBURG • B. Hulsman, ‘Nederlandse Protestantenvond’, in: F.J. Bakker et al. (eds.), *Kleine geloofsgemeenschappen te Elburg* (Elburg 1989), 21-24; *50 jaar NPB Elburg en omstreken* (s.l. 1992); GRONINGEN • J.M. Houkes, ‘Vrijzinnige netwerken in Groningen (1867-1900)’, in: Van Driel and Houkes (eds.), *Het vrijzinnige web*, 67-90; HARDERWIJK • H. Vrielink et al., *Een eeuw vrijzinnig protestantisme op de Noordwest-Veluwe 1884-1984. Gedenkschrift bij het honderdjarig bestaan van de Nederlandse Protestantenvond afdeling Harderwijk en omstreken* (s.l. 1984); D.J. Wolffram, *Bezwaarden en verlichten. Verzuiling in een Gelderse provincie stad, Harderwijk 1850-*

1925 (Amsterdam 1993), 126-128, 137-138, 207; HARDINXVELD-GIESSENDAM • R.P. de Groen, *100 jaar Nederlandse Protestantenvereeniging Hardinxveld-Giessendam* (Hardinxveld-Giessendam [1990]); HATTEM • R. Katgert and C. Schoemaker (eds.), *Afdeling Hattem en omgeving, 1961-2011. 50 jaar NPB-gebouw* (s.l. 2011); HUIZEN • *Vijftig jaar NPB Huizen. Uitgegeven ter gelegenheid van de jubileumviering op 5 juni 1994* (s.l. 1994); MAARSSSEN • A. de Zwart, 'De Nederlandse Protestantenvereeniging 90 jaar in Maarssen', *Historische Kring Maarssen XIV* (1987-1988), 15-18; LAREN / BLARICUM • *Laren / Blaricum, 1904-2004. Jubileumboekje ter gelegenheid van het 100-jarig bestaan van de afdeling Laren / Blaricum van de Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB* (s.l. [2004]); NAARDEN / BUSSUM • M. Katerberg-Muns et al., *Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB afdeling Naarden / Bussum 125 jaar, 21 maart 1882 – 21 maart 2007* (Bussum 2007); NOORDWIJK • H. van der Niet, G. Slats and W.J. Varkevisser, *Noordwijk en zijn kerken* (Noordwijk 1987), 78-79; OOST-TWENTE • J. Traas-Hageman, *Ruimte om het goede leven te oefenen. Feestboekje ter gelegenheid van 120 jaar Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB afdeling Oost-Twente, 1889-2009* (s.l. [2009]); OUD-BEIJERLAND • M.H.A. van der Valk, *Kerkelijk Oud-Beijerland* (Oud-Beijerland 1907), 169-171; *Afdeeling Oud-Beijerland van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvereeniging, 18 Juni 1905 – 18 Juni 1930* (s.l. [1930]); R. Strijder and H. Dijkstra, 'Al meer dan 125 jaar een vrijzinnig geluid in de Hoeksche Waard', *Beijerlandsche Berichten XIX.64* (September 2016), 4-36; PARIS (FRANCE) • A. Bruinenberg and A.C.J. van der Poel, *50 jaar afdeling Parijs van de Nederlandse Protestantenvereeniging* (s.l. 1989); A.C.J. van der Poel, *Vous êtes à l'écoute... U luistert naar... Bespiegelingen, herinneringen en feiten rond het zestigjarig bestaan van de NPB Parijs* ([The Hague 1999]); RENKUM • *100 jaar NPB Renkum* (s.l. 1982); B. Buntjer, *Honderdvijfentwintig jaar VG NPB Renkum, 1882-2007. Een terugblik* (s.l. [2008]); RHENEN • *Nederlandse Protestantenvereeniging afdeling Rhenen, 1916-1991* (s.l. [1991]); L.C. Scholten and P.C. Vis, *100 jaar vrijzinnigen in Rhenen, 1916-2016* (Rhenen 2016); RIJSSSEN / NIJVERDAL • H.H.A.B. Bergman et al. (eds.), *100 jaar N.P.B. aan de Regge. Afdeling Rijssen / Nijverdal e.o., 1890-1990* (Rijssen 1990); ROTTERDAM • J.F. Postma, *Evangelie en humaniteit. Honderd jaar Nederlandse Protestantenvereeniging in Rotterdam, 1890-1990* (Barendrecht 1990); SCHIEDAM • D. Rook, *Uit voorbij tijden. Momenten uit de opkomst en het voortbestaan der moderne richting in het zeventigjarig vereenigingsleven van vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen te Schiedam, 10 Oct. 1862-1932: de Vereeniging "Paulus", de "Protestantenvereeniging", de afdeling van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvereeniging* (Schiedam [1932]); Noordegraaf, 'F.W.N. Hugenholtz als voorganger van de Protestantenvereeniging in Schiedam'; P. de Goederen, *Schrijfbuch van Johannes de Goederen Wz. (1843-1901). Een van de grondleggers van de N.P.B. afdeling Schiedam* ([Schiedam] 1999); SOEST • *70 jaar N.P.B. Soest, 1921-1991* (s.l. [1991]); *Stemmen uit het verleden. Een jubileumuitgave van de Vereniging van Vrijzinnig Godsdienstigen te Soest, 1921-2006* (s.l. [2006]); *90 jaar NPB Soest. Jubileumuitgave van de Vereniging van Vrijzinnig Godsdienstigen te Soest, een afdeling van de Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB* (s.l. 2011); THE HAGUE • *Protestanten Bond afdeeling 's-Gravenhage, 1870-1930* (s.l. [1930]); *Nederlandsche Protestantenvereeniging Bond afdeeling 's-Gravenhage* (s.l. s.a.); N. van de Wall, *1970 en verder. Inleiding op de viering van het 100-jarig bestaan van de Nederlandse Protestantenvereeniging en de afdeling 's-Gravenhage, gehouden op 15 juni 1970 voor de raad van de afdeling* (s.l. [1970]); THOLEN • E.H. Cossee, 'De Protestantenvereeniging op Tholen. Zijn ontstaan en zijn eerste ontwikkeling', in: A. Wiggers et al. (eds.), *Rond de kerk in Zeeland* (Delft 1991), 271-280; TIEL • J. van Miert, *Wars van clubgeest en partijzucht. Liberalen, natie en verzuiling, Tiel en Winschoten, 1850-1920* (Amsterdam 1994), 40, 50, 147; UTRECHT • H.J.Ph.G. Kaajan, 'Historische schets van de Leeuwenberghgemeente (c. 1890-1960)', *Maandblad Oud-Utrecht LI.5* (1978), 49-52; VARSSEVELD • J. Bosch, *Honderd jaar geschiedenis van de afdeling Varsseveld van de Nederlandse Protestantenvereeniging, 1873-1973* (Varsseveld 1973); G.J. Westerveld, 'Het ontstaan van de Nederlandse Protestantenvereeniging in Varsseveld', *Contactorgaan A.D.W. van de Werkgemeenschap Aalten, Dinxperlo en Wisch XI* (1973), 33-35; M.H.E.A. Meijer-Paumen, *Eendrachtig en vrij, of de zinnige Varsseveldse paradox. Het boeiende verhaal van 125 jaar levenskrachtige vrijzinnigheid in de Achterhoek* (Varsseveld [1998]); VEENENDAAL • A.G. van Gilse, *Tachtig jaar Vrijzinnig Veenendaal* (Veenendaal 1987); J. van 't Riet, *Behoeft aan iets. Open Geloofsgemeenschap NPB Veenendaal, 1906-2006* (Veenendaal 2006); VELD • H. Bosland, *100 jaar NPB-kerk Veld. Bijlage bij Ambt & Heerlijkheid LI.149* (2005); VLAARDINGEN • J. Roest, *Vrije vogels. De geschiedenis van de vrijzinnige protestanten in Vlaardingen* (Rijswijk 1983), 29-61, 120, 124, 141; VOORBURG • H.G. de Cock et al. (eds.), *100 jaar VVG, 1906-2006. Gedenkboek van de Vereniging van Vrijzinnig Godsdienstigen Voorburg* (Voorburg 2006); VOORNE-PUTTEN / ROZENBURG • A. Polling-Wichers, *In vrijheid geloven: een hele kunst! Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB Voorne-Putten en Rozenburg* (Brielle 1995); WAGENINGEN • J. Rombach, *Geschiedenis van de samenwerking van de Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB afdeling Wageningen met de Doopsgezinde Gemeente Wageningen e.o.* (s.l. 2007); WAPENVELD • 'De andere kerkgenootschappen', *Heerde Historisch LXVIII* (1993), 51-56, there 55-56; WASSENAAR • F.H. Fockema Andreae and B. van der Ven-Scheffel (eds.), *NPB Wassenaar 75 jaar* (s.l. [1994]); WEESP • *Gedenkboekje ter gelegenheid van het 100-jarig bestaan van de Nederlandse Protestantenvereeniging Bond afdeling Weesp en omstreken op 27 januari 1980* (s.l. 1979); *Een klein boekje open over onszelf, ter gelegenheid van ons 125-jarig jubileum* (s.l. 2005); *Herinneringen bij 125 jaar Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB afdeling Weesp en omstreken & 100 jaar "Van Houten-kerk", 1880-1905-2005* (s.l. 2005); *Ruimte voor ontmoeting, bezinning, zorg. Het ontstaan, bestaan, leven en overleven van een kleine geloofsgemeenschap* (s.l. s.a.); WINSCHOTEN • Van Miert, *Wars van clubgeest en partijzucht*, 40, 147; WOUBRUGGE / NIEUWVEEN • *Samengaan. Nederlandse Protestantenvereeniging Woubrugge-Nieuwveen, 1886-1976* (s.l. [1976]); M.J. Aalders and M. Roos, *Honderd jaar NPB in Woubrugge* (s.l. 1987); ZANDVOORT • C. Schram,

before – the scarcity and insufficient state of archived sources, a lack of historical self-awareness among present-day religious liberals, historians' preoccupation with Protestant orthodoxy, and the marginalisation of organised liberal Protestantism during the twentieth century – account for the limited historiographical attention the NPB has received outside of its own circle.

#### 4. Methodology

Instead of focusing on one protagonist of Dutch modernism, one denomination and theological issues, as existing historiography mostly does, this study approaches the modernist movement as a cultural current in the broadest sense. By interpreting debates on church-related and social issues, it analyses the manifestation of modernist culture in church and society – that is, the way in which values, norms, and behaviours present in liberal Protestant circles were given concrete shape.<sup>78</sup> These debates were in large part held on platforms that the NPB provided, being the columns of *De Hervorming* as well as brochures and annual national conferences, of which verbatim reports and interpretations appeared in *De Hervorming*.<sup>79</sup> For that reason, an integral, systematic analysis of all sixty-two volumes of *De Hervorming* lies at the core of this study. Accordingly, this study is the first to give an in-depth analysis of the way in which the NPB, as the owner of *De Hervorming*, has functioned as a centre of Dutch modernist culture, contributed to the flow of modernist public opinion, and developed in interaction with discussions among modernists. It moreover analyses the concrete initiatives, particularly those within the organisational frame of the NPB, to which these discussions gave rise. *De Hervorming* has been the most important platform on which these discussions were held, but not the *only* platform. For that reason, a close reading of this magazine has merely laid the foundation of (and has been integrated in) a much broader analysis that includes many other (liberal Protestant) periodicals, and other literature, as well.<sup>80</sup>

According to social historian B.M.A. de Vries, the NPB was one of the earliest examples of a new type of association. Due to improved means of communication and transportation,<sup>81</sup> a strong rise in population, unwanted social side effects of industrialisation, an increase of opportunities to devote time to club life, and tendencies to socialise only with like-minded people, organisations that operated on the national level had local branches, asked a low

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*Brugstraat 15. De Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB Zandvoort, 1924-2002* (Zandvoort 2006); ZELHEM • W.H. Beunk, *Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB afdeling Zelhem e.o., 1892-1992* (Zelhem 1992); ZEIST • 75 jaar afdeling Zeist en omstreken van de Nederlandse Protestanten Bond, 1907-1982 (Zeist 1982); *Afdeling Zeist en omstreken van de Nederlandse Protestanten Bond, 1907-1987. Uitgave ter gelegenheid van het 80-jarig bestaan* (s.l. [1987]).

<sup>78</sup> Since anthropologist Ruth Benedict published *Patterns of Culture* in 1934, the whole of values, norms and behaviours in a particular group and the way in which these values, norms and behaviours take shape, is called a 'cultural pattern'. Unlike liberal Protestantism, Dutch neo-Calvinism has been studied in terms of a 'cultural pattern'. See: J. van Putten, *Zoveel kerken, zoveel zinnen. Een sociaalwetenschappelijke studie van verschillen in behoudendheid tussen gereformeerden en christelijke gereformeerden* (Kampen 1968), 169, 176, 210, 229; D.Th. Kuiper, 'De Doleantie en de Nederlandse samenleving', in: W. Bakker et al. (eds.), *De Doleantie van 1886 en haar geschiedenis* (Kampen 1986), 203-239, there 233; C. de Gast, *Godsdienst en samenleving in het Land van Heusden en Altena. Confessie, bevinding en verzuiling, 1900-1961* (Tilburg 1993), 131; Kuiper (De Bruijn, De Bruijn and Schutte eds.), *Tussen observatie en participatie*, passim.

<sup>79</sup> The lectures held at the annual meeting of modern theologians in Amsterdam, another important platform for modernist thinking, were also commented upon and usually integrally published in *De Hervorming*.

<sup>80</sup> Those other periodicals are listed in the third section of the bibliography.

<sup>81</sup> Such as railroad construction, due to which it became possible to travel from one Dutch place to another within a day and hence to convene a general assembly at a different location each year. The influence of railroad construction on the development of Dutch orthodox Protestantism has already been analysed. See: D.Th. Kuiper and J. Vree, *Het liep op rolletjes. De eenwording van protestants-christelijk Nederland per rail 1839-1939* (Zoetermeer 2007).

membership contribution, explicitly based all their activities on a political or religious ideology, and represented the bourgeois preoccupation with the ‘civilising’ of the lower classes came into being.<sup>82</sup> Because of the exemplary character of the NPB, more insight into this organisation contributes to a better understanding of the functioning of these ‘modern’ mass associations. Moreover, the emergence of these associations was an international trend, but national peculiarities thereof have yet to be explained.<sup>83</sup> The NPB pre-eminently lends itself to such an international comparison. Together with a handful of other organisations of liberal Protestants, which came into being in several European countries between the 1860s and 1880s, it was modelled after the German *Protestantenverein*. The NPB had contact with all of these organisations, as well as with older associations of Anglo-Saxon Unitarians. Although this study primarily focuses on the Netherlands, it is not blind to developments in other countries, and intends to instigate further research on liberal Protestantism as an international movement in church and society.<sup>84</sup>

By issuing *De Hervorming*, the NPB has fostered a culture of debate in Dutch liberal Protestant circles more than any other organisation. Magazines such as *De Hervorming* have long been ignored as sources for historical research. Hemels stated in 1991 that the growing “differences in mutual appreciation and social prestige” between academic historians and journalists during the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ‘golden age’ of the Dutch press was responsible for this. Historians did not acknowledge the contribution of the periodical press to, among other things, “the raising of public opinion, [...], local, regional and national political culture, cultural life in all its forms, [...], national self-awareness, changes in norms and value patterns, religious life, [and] the introduction to and experience of art and literature.”<sup>85</sup> In contrast to their colleagues in other countries, journalists in the Netherlands therefore had a marginal position in intellectual life. Although Hemels noticed that the press had gradually come to be recognised as a valuable object and source of historical inquiry, research on, or based upon, the liberal Protestant periodical press continued to be scarce.<sup>86</sup> In the last quarter century, only a handful of articles and one commemorative booklet have taken the ‘institutional’ history of a liberal Protestant magazine as their object of study.<sup>87</sup> Historians who want to consult

<sup>82</sup> B.M.A. de Vries, ‘Een eeuw vol gezelligheid. Verenigingsleven in Nederland, 1800-1900’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis* na 1800 XXVIII.63 (December 2005), 16-29, there 24-27; B.M.A. de Vries, ‘Van deftigheid en volksopvoeding naar massacultuur. Het Amsterdamse verenigingsleven in de negentiende eeuw’, in: M. Vrolijk et al. (eds.), *Jaarboek van het Genootschap Amstelodamum* XCVIII (Amsterdam 2006), 82-105, there 98-102. See also: Kuiper (De Bruijn, De Bruijn and Schutte eds.), *Tussen observatie en participatie*, 356.

<sup>83</sup> De Vries, ‘Een eeuw vol gezelligheid’, 28-29.

<sup>84</sup> De Vries highlights that little is known about the networks behind such associations. See: *Ibid.*, 29. A pilot study on the role of networks in the emergence of the NPB is given in: Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’.

<sup>85</sup> “...verschillen in wederzijdse waardering en maatschappelijk aanzien...”; “...voor de vorming van de publieke opinie, [...], voor de lokale, regionale en nationale politieke cultuur, voor het culturele leven in al zijn vormen, [...], voor het nationale zelfgevoel, voor de verandering van normen en waardenpatronen, voor het godsdienstig leven, [en] voor de kennismaking met en beleving van kunst en literatuur.” Quoted from: Hemels, ‘De pers als “een der groote machten”’, 53-54.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 54-55. In the last couple of years, several newspapers were taken as source and object of study, for example in: M.J. Broersma, *Beschaafde vooruitgang. De wereld van de Leeuwarder Courant, 1752-2002* (Leeuwarden 2002); K. de Jong, *De geschiedenis van het Friesch Dagblad I. 1903-1935: Zij zullen het niet hebben* (Kampen 2003); II. 1935-1971: *Gods eer zij 't merk van al uw werk* ([Gorredijk] 2015); M.H.B.B. Wolf, *Het geheim van De Telegraaf. Geschiedenis van een krant* (Amsterdam 2009); A.J. Mooij, *Dag in, dag uit. Een journalistieke geschiedenis van de Volkskrant vanaf 1980* (Amsterdam 2011); P. van der Hoeven, *Het succes van een kwaliteitskrant. De ontstaansgeschiedenis van NRC Handelsblad* (Amsterdam 2012).

<sup>87</sup> E.B. Veldkamp, *Geest en vrijheid. Schetsen na 86 jaar “Kerk & Wereld”* (Maarssen 1995); D. Jansen, “‘Teekenen des Tijds. Tweemaandelijksch tijdschrift in vrijzinnig godsdienstigen geest’ (1899-1919)”, *Documentatieblad voor*



such a magazine are confronted with incomplete archives. In 2007, historian G. Harinck could accordingly still characterise the historical liberal Protestant press as ‘obscure’.<sup>88</sup> While doing research for his 1993 dissertation, Harinck had experienced himself how challenging it is to work with incomplete or totally absent press archives. Studying the editorial policy of the neo-Calvinist magazine *De Reformatie* – the English translation of which, ‘*The Reformation*’, is similar to the English translation of *De Hervorming* –, he had to deal with the circumstance that the archive of the editorial board was lost. He had to construct his narrative on the basis of the remaining paper copies (‘*leggers*’ in Dutch) of *De Reformatie*. Reviewing Harinck’s dissertation, Hemels suggested that “it is worthwhile to study historical periodicals, [an endeavour] which has long been neglected in the Netherlands, with paper magazine copies as point of departure.”<sup>89</sup>

Of *De Hervorming*, no editorial archive has survived the ravages of time either. Just as Harinck, I thus have to rely on paper magazine copies and secondary sources. Different from Harinck, however, I am more concerned with the *content* of articles than with what happened ‘behind the scenes’. In the particular case of *De Hervorming*, this proved to be a heuristic difficulty; as stated before, there is no institution possessing copies of all issues of *De Hervorming*. To be able to integrally study the magazine, I had to make numerous visits to several libraries and archives. I managed to trace every single issue of the magazine and to construct a database of photographs of the entire sixty-two volumes, comprising nearly 20,000 densely printed pages.<sup>90</sup> As this study accentuates, Hemels is right to assert that it is worthwhile to methodologically base historical research on a systematic study of paper magazine copies. In the case of *De Hervorming*, it sheds light on the diverse functions that the most important Dutch modernist opinion magazine has had. Moreover, it yields new insights and gives rise to new interpretations about the nature and demise of the Dutch modernist movement.

## 5. A New Perspective

On the basis of a close reading of *De Hervorming* and many other periodicals, I challenge existing characterisations of the modernist movement. Calling it an ‘*emancipatiebeweging*’ (‘emancipation movement’), as Nepveu does, is problematic in several respects. Portraying the modernist

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*de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XX.51 (December 1999), 3-22; Van Driel, “‘De Hervorming’”; J.A. de Waal, “‘Het Kouter. Onafhankelijk tijdschrift voor religie en cultuur’”. Een miniatuur uit het rijke vrijzinnige leven tussen de twee wereldoorlogen’, in: Mikkers and Smit (eds.), *Tussen Augustinus en atheïsme*, 153-163; J.A. de Waal, ‘Vrijzinnigheid in de crisisjaren. Over de geschiedenis en inhoud van “Het Kouter”, 1936-1941’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXX.67 (December 2007), 2-39; Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’.

<sup>88</sup> G. Harinck, ‘Recensies – “Dienaar van twee heren”’, *BMGN CXXII.4* (2007), 1-3, there 1.

<sup>89</sup> “...dat het in Nederland zo verwaarloosde historisch tijdschriftonderzoek met de leggers als vertrekpunt loont.” Quoted from: J.M.H.J. Hemels, ‘Recensies – “De Reformatie”’, *Ibid.* CX.2 (1995), 308-310, there 310.

<sup>90</sup> In order to construct this database, in which not a single edition of *De Hervorming* is missing, I have consulted the following libraries and archives: the Special Collections of the University Libraries of Amsterdam, Groningen and Leiden; the National Archives of the Netherlands in The Hague; the Utrecht Archives; the *Persmuseum* in Amsterdam; the *Stads- en Athenaeumbibliotheek* in Deventer; and the archive of the *Vrijzinnige Geloofsgemeenschap NPB / Vrijzinnigen Nederland* in Zwolle and Amersfoort. I have also consulted and collected other newspapers and magazines in these libraries and archives, as well as in the Andover Harvard Theological Library at Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts; the Special Collections of the Utrecht University Library; the *Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen* in Groningen; the *Fries Historisch en Letterkundig Centrum ‘Tresoor’* in Leeuwarden; the *Historisch Documentatiecentrum voor het Nederlands Protestantisme (1800-heden)* in Amsterdam; and in the (digitalised) databases mentioned in the bibliography. It goes without saying that I have consulted all the libraries and archives here, as well as numerous others, to read and collect additional source material and secondary literature. A fact sheet of *De Hervorming*, including the number of pages per volume, is given in appendix A.

movement as a radicalisation of the ideal modern man's endeavour to emancipate himself from the intellectual and moral constraints imposed upon him by church and religion, to which Nepveu refers as 'secularisation', and labelling the outcome of this endeavour 'desacralisation', is tenable only if the 'secularisation theory' is used as an explanatory framework. Yet, recent studies have refuted the premises of this theory.<sup>91</sup> A declining social influence of religious institutions on the one hand and of religion as such on the other hand are not two sides of the same coin, while 'desacralising' tendencies are not the inevitable result of the progress of time. Secularisation theory defines 'religion' too narrowly in institutional terms. It can be questioned whether Western history is really driven by modern man's attempt to 'secularise' the world, and if it is modern man's drive to free himself from religion at all. If so, why did freethinking, which already existed when modernism emerged and was way more radical in its critique of church and religion, not attract more adherents? Instead of trying to downplay the role of church and religion, the modernist movement intended exactly the opposite; it wanted to preserve church and religion, albeit differently shaped, as dominant social forces in future society and culture. Calling the modernist movement an 'emancipation movement' because it led people to abandon the church and in some cases religion altogether – although, as Kruijt already claimed in the 1930s, the relationship between this process and modernism was not straightforward –, is hence rather deterministic. Moreover, the term 'emancipation' suggests that modernists were struggling to attain a position they did not have. In the formative years of the modernist movement, however, modernists did not form a rearguard, either in church or in society.<sup>92</sup>

This last matter also explains why I think it is misleading to depict the modernist movement as a '*tegenbeweging*' ('countermovement'), as Buitenwerf-van der Molen tends to do. Against what did it react? Against orthodoxy? Not exactly; as of the 1870s, it rather tried to counterattack orthodoxy's attempts to prevent modernism from exerting a strong influence on church life. When the modernist movement emerged, orthodoxy was still in a subordinate position. Did it react, then, against the dominance of the so-called 'Groningen' or '*evangelische*' movement, which nuanced orthodox notions, while clinging to a supernatural reading of the New Testament? On the contrary, as modernism rapidly gained a position equal to and ultimately more influential than the Groningen movement in the Dutch Reformed governing bodies in the 1850s and 1860s. It was not really hindered in its rise by 'Groningen' Protestants.<sup>93</sup> If the term 'countermovement' is intended to refer to radical thinking and acting, it is incorrect to depict the modernist movement

<sup>91</sup> E.g.: M. Franzmann, C. Gärtner and N. Köck (eds.), *Religiosität in der säkularisierten Welt. Theoretische und empirische Beiträge zur Säkularisierungsdebatte in der Religionssoziologie* (Wiesbaden 2006); C.G. Brown and M. Snape (eds.), *Secularisation in the Christian World. Essays in Honour of Hugh McLeod* (Farnham 2010); H.J. Paul, 'De erfenis van Wickham. Naar een nieuwe fase in het secularisatieonderzoek', *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* CXXVII.1 (2014), 107-128.

<sup>92</sup> Nepveu's use of the term 'emancipation movement' is rather misleading, as he attaches a different meaning to it than sociologists do. One of the latter, H. Verwey-Jonker, defines an 'emancipation movement' as "those social activities that are aimed at a change in the balance of power in favour of the own group" ("...*die sociale activiteiten die op verandering van de machtsbasis ten gunste van de eigen groep gericht zijn.*"). Quoted from: H. Verwey-Jonker, *Emancipatiebewegingen in Nederland* (Deventer 1983), 9. She therefore rightfully concludes that Dutch liberal Protestantism can hardly be called an 'emancipation movement'. See: *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>93</sup> Not even in Friesland, where the Groningen movement had a particularly strong position in the mid-nineteenth century. See, e.g.: M. Wijt-Posthuma, *Herinneringen aan de opkomst der moderne richting op het platteland in Friesland* (Amsterdam 1906); H.J. Busé, 'Het modernisme in Friesland omstreeks 1870', *Nederlandsch Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis* XV.2 (1919), 81-114, there 81-85; R. Klooster, *Groninger Godgeleerdheid in Friesland, 1830-1872* (Leeuwarden 2001), 234-235, 292-293.

as such as well. As I argue in more detail later on, modernists, whom Buitenwerf-van der Molen wrongly portrays as a monolithic bloc,<sup>94</sup> were not as radical as they claimed to be.

Ever since Herderscheê wrote the first history of the Dutch modernist movement in 1904 and concluded that the initial expectations of the first generation of modernists had proved to be an illusion or even a delusion, a select group of historians has written about modernist history. Most of them, such as Van der Kam, Nepveu and Buitenwerf-van der Molen, recognise that the modernist movement gradually lost influence and did not manage to grow numerically, without making an attempt to explain this.

With this study, I do want to make such an attempt. Next to analysing *how* the modernist movement has developed against the background of its endeavour to modernise Christianity and to Christianise modern society, I interpret *why* modernist history as of the 1870s has been one of steady decline, *why* a movement that tried to keep pace with the process of modernisation paradoxically marginalised when this process went on.

The few existing explanations are valid in themselves, yet insufficient. In their analyses, Roessingh and Lindeboom primarily look at the modernist movement as a movement within the sphere of theology and church. They assert that first-generation modernism had been, on the whole, theologically too optimistic, seeing human beings as easily ‘malleable’ creatures who would ultimately no longer be able to deny the irrefutability of modernist truth, and too intellectualistic, painstakingly trying to construct sound thought systems at the expense of emotional life. Moreover, it had tended to underappreciate the institution of the church, as a result of which the modernist movement relinquished a strong ecclesial position. However, indicating first-generation modernists’ theological and ecclesial ‘shortcomings’ is in itself not enough to explain why the modernist movement ceased to grow and realise its social ambitions. Neo-Calvinism, for example, was theologically optimistic and intellectualistic as well, and did manage to grow and to profoundly influence the direction Dutch society has taken. Bos, and others with him, similarly restrict their analysis to the field of the church, when referring to the year 1867 as a turning point in modernist history. The right that all male members of the Dutch Reformed Church received to elect ministers, elders and deacons, played into the hands of orthodoxy. Yet the weakening of the modernist movement is then solely attributed to an external cause. Also limiting his analysis to the ecclesial domain, Kruijt suggests that the modernist movement was unable to increase its numerical strength, because, combined with other factors, it encouraged people to leave the church.<sup>95</sup> He does not concern himself with the *content* of the modernist message, only with its outcome, and leaves unanswered the question of why the modernist movement, which had both a church and a non-church segment, was unable to retain people who left the churches within its non-church segment. For example, the growth of the membership figure of the NPB severely lagged behind the number of people who gave up their church membership.

Saying that someone is orthodox purely on psychological grounds, as Van Mourik Broekman does, excludes religious motivations from the picture and is just as speculative as arguing on a pneumatological or faith basis that people are orthodox because the Holy Spirit

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<sup>94</sup> G.J. van Klinken, ‘Boekbesprekingen – “God van vooruitgang”’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerk-geschiedenis na 1800* XXX.67 (December 2007), 60.

<sup>95</sup> One of the leading modernist opinion makers of his time, M.C. van Mourik Broekman, endorsed this view. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Gesteldheden en verwachtingen betreffende het vrijzinnig protestantisme’, *De Smidse* VIII.7/8 (July/August 1933), 193-205, there 203.

‘convinced’ them of orthodoxy’s truths. Moreover, Van Mourik Broekman does not thoroughly reflect upon the social consequences of the psychological distinction he described.

Molendijk’s thesis that liberal Protestantism ‘evaporated’ because the process of pillarisation gave the deathblow to its ideal of a broad ‘big tent’ church or ‘*volkskerk*’ is problematic in several respects. First of all, it is an oversimplification to identify a *volkskerk* as *the* ideal that modernists pursued. The ideal of a *volkskerk* was only cherished in liberal Reformed circles – not among Lutherans, Remonstrants and Mennonites, who also participated in the modernist movement. While Remonstrants had still cherished the hope to be once reintegrated into the Dutch Reformed Church in the mid-nineteenth century,<sup>96</sup> they, together with Mennonites, even began to increasingly assert as of the late nineteenth century that modernists were way better off in their church communities, which could not be called ‘broad’ at all and which were explicitly based on liberal principles, than they were in the massive Dutch Reformed Church. They thus obviously competed *against* the ideal of a *volkskerk*. True, the great majority of modernists were members of the Dutch Reformed Church, but not every Reformed modernist continued to be so just because he cherished this ideal. Moreover, as I show, the ideal of a *volkskerk* only came to be accentuated in liberal Reformed circles towards the end of the nineteenth century, when the consequences of pillarisation first became fully visible. By seeing the thwarted realisation of this ideal as *the* cause of the downfall of liberal Protestantism as an organised religion, Molendijk implies that, in his view, the ultimate fate of the modernist movement depended on its position of power in church life.

Yet, the modernist movement did not only manifest itself in church life, but also in social life. Should its marginalisation in society also then be attributed to its presumed ideal of a *volkskerk*? This is indeed what Molendijk’s argument boils down to. His line of reasoning is that the ideal of the *volkskerk* made modernists reluctant to get organised. Because they, in Molendijk’s account, aspired after a broad church in which all Dutch should be welcome to worship together – as such, the *volkskerk* should be the ecclesial embodiment of national unity and social harmony –, modernists were hesitant to organise themselves separately, as that would further social segregation along ideological lines. And this was exactly what the process of pillarisation did; in society, Roman Catholics, orthodox Protestants and, to a lesser extent, social democrats, founded organisations exclusively based on their own principles of life. These groups were hence much better organised than modernists, as a result of which the latter were pushed into a tight corner. Eventually, as Molendijk indicates, modernists half-heartedly and only partly went along with the process of pillarisation.<sup>97</sup> One might expect that this caused the ideal of a *volkskerk* to be abandoned, but, as said before, the opposite was true. As I show, an accentuation of the ideal of a *volkskerk* in liberal Reformed circles, and modernist attempts to become better organised, in fact occurred simultaneously.

A lack of organisation undeniably contributed to the ‘evaporation’ of liberal Protestantism, but it cannot fully explain this evaporation. Molendijk’s argument wrongfully suggests that the modernist movement would have had a firmer grip on church and society if it had been better organised – or, to put it differently, if its ideal of a *volkskerk* would not have become impossible to realise due to the process of pillarisation. I strongly doubt that. Molendijk actually ascribes

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<sup>96</sup> Barnard, *Van ‘verstoten kind’ tot belijdende kerk*, 27-30.

<sup>97</sup> Molendijk, ‘De vervluchtiging van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland’, 129.

the downfall of the modernist movement to an *external* cause, namely pillarisation. However, this downfall had already started when the process of pillarisation was on the verge of taking off. As I demonstrate, the modernist movement began to alienate ‘intellectuals’, to borrow modernists’ own terminology, as early as the 1860s. Nor did it ever manage to exert a strong appeal on the working classes. Clearly, there was something intrinsic to the modernist movement itself that hindered it from becoming the influential reform movement it wanted to be, not simply a lack of organisation due to the ideal of a *volkskerk*.

In contrast to the explanations of modernist history given so far, I put forward an interpretation that explains Dutch modernist history on the basis of *internal* causes, and that explains both why the modernist movement failed to thoroughly realise its goals of modernising Christianity and Christianising modern society, and, in response to Van der Kam and the authors of *Tussen geest en tijdgeest*, why its appeal was limited. My argument is twofold.

First, the Dutch modernist movement was neither as ‘radical’ nor as ‘modern’ as it claimed to be. I think it is justified to stick the label ‘*tegendraads*’ (‘recalcitrant’ or ‘radical’) on modern *theology*, as theologian E.H. Cossee does in a 1999 book chapter.<sup>98</sup> As of the mid-nineteenth century, modern theology has provoked nothing less than a revolution in the way the Bible is studied and interpreted, and its practitioners have truly been a vanguard. Although some of the premises and interpretations of earlier generations of modern theologians have come to be rejected, and although some of the most prominent Dutch modern theologians, such as Roessingh, turned towards orthodox concepts of Christian faith in the early twentieth century, the hermeneutical principles and exegetical practices that modern theologians already put forward around 1850 are now mainstream among academic theologians and church ministers.<sup>99</sup> On the other hand, I argue that the ecclesial and social reform-mindedness in modernist circles was not as big as could be expected on the basis of the ambitions and pretensions with which the modernist movement announced itself.

Second, the modernist movement was intrinsically bourgeois. I argue that its bourgeois character found expression in a dominant discourse, in reference to which I coin the concept of the ‘spiritual aristocracy of tutors’.<sup>100</sup> In turn, this discourse explains why modernists were, in general, hesitant to adopt schemes that had the purpose of reaching the masses in their entirety, and why they were reluctant to experiment with new forms in which a modernised Christianity could find expression in church and society – in brief, it makes clear that modernists’ inability to bring about ecclesial and social reforms not only had to do with a lack of organisation, with general developments in church and society, or with (first-generation) modernists’ unrealistic expectations and overambitious goals, but also, first and foremost, with modernists themselves. Moreover, I demonstrate that, due to the discourse of a spiritual aristocracy of tutors, the modernist movement was able neither to attract the growing number of people involved in the organised labour movement, nor to maintain a firm grip on the nation’s intellectual, artistic and political elite. It lacked appeal among the lower classes and ‘intellectuals’ not merely because modernists’ theological views were perceived as being too vague. Although I do not substantiate my argument

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<sup>98</sup> E.H. Cossee, ‘Tegendraadse theologie. Terugblik op vier eeuwen vrijzinnigheid in Nederland’, in: W.B. Drees (ed.), *Een beetje geloven. Actualiteit en achtergronden van het vrijzinnig christendom* (Amsterdam 1999), 181-200.

<sup>99</sup> This is not to say that historical-critical methodology is not criticised in contemporary theology. See: D.R. Law, *The Historical-Critical Method. A Guide for the Perplexed* (London and New York 2012), 216-237.

<sup>100</sup> I have introduced this argument in: Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 54-57.

with prosopographical data, I argue that modernist discourse in itself reveals much about the dominant class background of modernists, as it had strong class connotations in both a socio-economic and socio-cultural sense, and was closely linked to the nineteenth-century bourgeois 'offensive' to 'civilise' the lower classes.<sup>101</sup> This offensive was not typically modernist, but it found expression among modernists in a specific discourse. As my analysis shows, this discourse was imbued with class-consciousness.<sup>102</sup> I want to stress that I do *not* argue that the discourse of a spiritual aristocracy of tutors led all modernists to draw the same conclusions regarding church and social reform.

## 6. Defining 'Bourgeois'

The term 'bourgeois', both a noun and an adjective related to the noun 'bourgeoisie', is borrowed from French directly into English.<sup>103</sup> There is no exact idiomatic English equivalent to the French word '*bourgeois*', although leading English dictionaries take it to be synonymous with 'middle class' (hyphenated when used as an adjective).<sup>104</sup> No contemporary historian writing in Dutch would, however, use the term '*bourgeois*' – which is borrowed from French directly into Dutch as well, and therefore italicised here – when he is referring to the middle class, unless he wants to criticise the norms, values and behaviours typically associated with middle-class people. In Dutch, different from English, the term '*bourgeois*' has an implicitly pejorative connotation. It is inextricably linked to Marxist discourse, depicting the 'bourgeoisie' as the ruling capitalist class that refuses to share its wealth and political power with the 'proletarian' working force on which its affluence depends.<sup>105</sup> More neutral terms are the adjective '*burgerlijk*' and the noun '*burgerij*', but from a historical point of view, a Dutch *burger* and a French *bourgeois* were not entirely similar.<sup>106</sup> The German adjective '*bürgerlich*' is etymologically related to '*burgerlijk*', but has

<sup>101</sup> For the Dutch context, sociologist De Regt has emphasised the bourgeois or middle-class character of nineteenth-century reform movements: these gave shape to the bourgeois preoccupation with 'civilising' the lower classes. By so doing, she argued, the middle classes accentuated their own position in society. See: A.J. de Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid: ontwikkelingen in Nederland 1870-1940. Een historisch-sociologische studie* (Mepel 1984), 246-247. See also: J.A. Righart, 'Moraliseringsoffensief in Nederland in de periode 1850-1880', in: H.F.M. Peeters, H.M. Dresen-Coenders and J.A. Brandenbarg (eds.), *Vijf eeuwen gezinsleven. Liefde, huwelijk en opvoeding in Nederland* (Nijmegen 1988), 194-208, 205.

<sup>102</sup> Bos is right to state that the emergence of the modernist movement was linked to the rise of the middle classes, and Molendijk justly states that modernism was a vehicle of the expression of middle-class ideals, but they do not justify their statements. See: Bos, *In dienst van het Koninkrijk*, 259, 359; Molendijk, 'De vervluchting van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland', 128. My analysis does substantiate that the Dutch modernist movement had an *inherently* bourgeois character. Also noticing modernists' strong sense of class, Van Klinken wondered why this was the case and why many modern theologians clung to a rather conservative outlook on social affairs. See: Van Klinken, 'Boekbesprekingen – "God van vooruitgang"', 60. My answer would be: because Dutch modernism was, as modernist discourse reveals, first and foremost a religion for and of the bourgeoisie. Modernists' philosophy of life and world view were imbued with class-consciousness. The discourse in which this philosophy of life and world view found expression had, as I argue, strong socio-economic implications in practice.

<sup>103</sup> A conceptual history of the French term '*bourgeoisie*' is given in: A. Daumard, *Les bourgeois et la bourgeoisie en France depuis 1815* (Paris 1987); B. Le Wita, *Ni vue ni connue. Approche ethnographique de la culture bourgeoise* (Paris 1988); L. Coste, *Les bourgeoisies en France. Du XVI<sup>e</sup> au milieu du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris 2013).

<sup>104</sup> 'Bourgeois', 'Bourgeoisie', in: *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield [1898] 2004), 146; 'Bourgeois', in: *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (Cambridge etc. [1995] 2008), 161; 'Bourgeois', 'Bourgeoisie', in: *Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford etc. [1998] 2010), 203.

<sup>105</sup> Differences and similarities between 'bourgeois' and '*burgerlijk*' are given in: H. te Velde, 'How High Did the Dutch Fly? Remarks on Stereotypes of Burger Mentality', in: J.B.E. Galema et al. (eds.), *Images of the Nation. Different Meanings of Dutchness, 1870-1940* (Amsterdam 1993), 59-79.

<sup>106</sup> S. Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches. An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (Berkeley and London 1988), 4-8; W.R.E. Velema, 'Beschaafde republikeinen. Burgers in de achttiende eeuw', in: R.A.M. Aerts

some context-specific (Romanticist, nationalist, conservative) connotations that are absent or less strongly implied in the Dutch adjective ‘*burgerlijk*’. Moreover, only in German historiography, a distinction is made within the *Bürgertum* between those whose social identity was based above all on their *Besitz* (their economic activities and material belongings) and those who primarily derived their social status from their *Bildung* (an untranslatable term, including culture and education).<sup>107</sup> Thus, notwithstanding overlap in meaning between ‘*bourgeois*’, ‘middle-class’, ‘*burgerlijk*’ and ‘*bürgerlich*’, there are differences in nuance between them.<sup>108</sup> Because ‘bourgeois’ is such a central term in my argumentation, it therefore needs to be carefully defined.

The bourgeoisie originated as the ‘third estate’ in the *Ancien Régime*, being separated from the first estate (the clergy) and the second estate (the nobility). It particularly referred to townspeople involved in mercantile activities and at least minimally educated, who did not live in extreme poverty, yet did not own the means of production themselves. As a result of the Industrial Revolution and the political emancipation of the third estate all across Europe after the French Revolution, the old estate-based society, in which one’s birth, privileges and political power determined one’s place in the social hierarchy, gradually developed in the nineteenth century into a class-based society, in which one’s position on the social ladder primarily came to depend on one’s material (and intellectual) capital. Simultaneously, the bourgeoisie developed into what came to be known as the ‘middle classes’, standing between the working, or lower, classes on the one hand, and the upper class on the other hand.<sup>109</sup> The middle classes could roughly be divided into three strata: a lower one (also called the ‘petty bourgeoisie’), a middle one (which I call the ‘middle class proper’), and an upper one (the upper middle class).<sup>110</sup>

In the Dutch context, the upper class comprised, in any case, the descendants of the pre-nineteenth-century political and economic elite, being the nobility, but also, and arguably in greater numbers, families of non-noble origin that had produced several generations of political office holders (so-called ‘*regenten*’).<sup>111</sup> Yet, where the line needs be drawn between the upper class

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and H. te Velde (eds.), *De stijl van de burger. Over Nederlandse burgerlijke cultuur vanaf de middeleeuwen* (Kampen 1998), 80-99.

<sup>107</sup> Of the vast amount of literature on German *Bürgertum*, see, e.g.: W. Conze, J. Kocka, R. Koselleck and M.R. Lepsius (eds.), *Bildungsbürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert I-IV* (Stuttgart 1985-1992); U. Engelhardt, “*Bildungsbürgertum*”. *Begriffs- und Dogmengeschichte eines Etiketts* (Stuttgart 1986); J. Kocka (ed.), *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen 1987); J. Kocka, *Industrial Culture and Bourgeois Society. Business, Labor, and Democracy in Modern Germany* (New York and Oxford 1999), 275-297.

<sup>108</sup> See also: F. Moretti, *The Bourgeois. Between History and Literature* (London and Brooklyn 2013), 1-24.

<sup>109</sup> Obviously, this brief sketch of the evolution of the ‘third estate’ into the ‘middle classes’ cannot do full justice to the historiographical debate on this matter. More thorough interpretations are given in: Le Wita, *Ni vue ni connue*; E.J.E. Hobsbawm, ‘The Making of a “Bourgeois Revolution”’, in: F. Fehér (ed.), *The French Revolution and the Birth of Modernity* (Berkeley etc. 1990), 30-48; P.M. Pilbeam, ‘Bourgeois Society’, in: S. Berger (ed.), *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Europe, 1789-1914* (Malden etc. 2006), 86-97.

<sup>110</sup> Other classifications are possible as well. I use a simplified subdivision for the sake of clarity.

<sup>111</sup> Nobles and *regenten* had collectively formed the elite in the Dutch Republic, but had remained separate social spheres. They had not really intermingled. See, e.g.: Y.B. Kuiper, *Adel in Friesland, 1780-1880* (Groningen 1993), 74-81; M. Prak, *De Gouden Eeuw. Het raadsel van de Republiek* (Amsterdam 2012), 147-156; Y.B. Kuiper, ‘Onderzoek naar de buitenplaatsen in de Gouden Eeuw. Een vogelvluchtperspectief’, in: Y.B. Kuiper and L.H.M. Olde Meierink (eds.), *Buitenplaatsen in de Gouden Eeuw. De rijkdom van het buitenleven in de Republiek* (Hilversum 2015), 10-41, there 31. Some, yet far from all, *regenten* families were ennobled after the creation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in 1815.

As a professional group, ministers had not been part of the pre-nineteenth-century Dutch elite, but the social position they had had in the Dutch Republic should not be underestimated. See: G. Groenhuis, *De sociale positie van de gereformeerde predikanten in de Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden voor ±1700* (Groningen 1977), 178-180.

and the upper middle class remains arbitrary, as these classes partially coalesced.<sup>112</sup> In his study on Dutch elite culture after 1848, Moes therefore classifies nobles and the descendants of *regenten*, groups to which he both refers as ‘aristocrats’, with so-called ‘prominent citizens’ into one single ‘elite of dignitaries’. The category of ‘prominent citizens’ at least included the families who could pride themselves on having produced several generations of dignitaries (such as professors, high church officials, and successful merchants), and who were therefore eligible to be included in *Nederland’s Patriciaat* as of the early twentieth century.<sup>113</sup> It was not uncommon for such families to imitate the culture of the groups Moes calls ‘aristocrats’.<sup>114</sup> Below, in order not to complicate things, I will refer to all non-nobles within the elite of dignitaries – hence the descendants of *regenten*, and prominent citizens – simply as ‘patrician’.<sup>115</sup>

In the course of the nineteenth century, the term ‘bourgeois’ did not only come to have a socio-economic denotation; it also came to stand for a particular lifestyle or culture, of which individualism, decorum, respectability, refinement, education, sociability, and an attempt to ‘civilise’ the lower classes were key elements.<sup>116</sup> The ideals, values and ideas intrinsic to this culture found their political expression in liberalism, due to which ‘bourgeois’ culture is generally used as synonymous with ‘liberal’ culture.<sup>117</sup> Chapter 9 deals with the constituents of ‘bourgeois’ or ‘liberal’ culture in more detail. The socio-economic and socio-cultural meanings of the term ‘bourgeois’ were related, yet did not entirely coincide. One could have a ‘patrician’ background, but identify with bourgeois instead of aristocratic culture nonetheless. For instance, some modernist ministers belonged to ‘patrician’ families, sometimes indicated by an unhyphenated double surname (which could imply an aristocratic, yet not necessarily noble origin), but were shown to be culturally bourgeois.<sup>118</sup> The opposite was possible as well: one could have a middle-

<sup>112</sup> See, e.g.: Y.B. Kuiper, ‘Uitsterven of uithuwelijken? Een analyse van het demografisch gedrag van de adel in Friesland in de 18<sup>de</sup> en 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw’, *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis* XII.3 (1986), 269-299, there 288-289, 295; Y.B. Kuiper, ‘Aristocraten contra burgers. Couperus’ “Boeken der kleine zielen” en het beschavingsoffensief rond 1900’, in: Aerts and Te Velde (eds.), *De stijl van de burger*, 186-217; R. van der Laarse and Y.B. Kuiper, ‘Inleiding’, in: R. van der Laarse and Y.B. Kuiper (eds.), *Beelden van de buitenplaats. Elitevorming en notabelen-cultuur in Nederland in de negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum 2005), 9-24, there 20.

<sup>113</sup> *Nederland’s Patriciaat* is a register that is issued (more or less) annually since 1910, and includes, as mentioned in its first edition, non-noble branches of noble families, families related to noble families by marriage, and families who were considered to belong to the “high society” (“*eerste kringen*”) because they had produced several generations of high office holders. See: ‘Voorbericht’, in: *Nederland’s Patriciaat* I. 1910 (The Hague [1910]), I-III, there I. It thus includes non-noble aristocratic families as well as families of prominent citizens. In the second half of the twentieth century, the criteria to be included in *Nederland’s Patriciaat* would be broadened. On the ‘patrician’, elite character of the circle of nineteenth-century high church officials, see: Bos, *In dienst van het Koninkrijk*, 97-101.

<sup>114</sup> J.K.S. Moes, *Onder aristocraten. Over hegemonie, welstand en aanzien van adel, patriciaat en andere notabelen in Nederland, 1848-1914* (Hilversum 2012), 41-48, 122-275. More so than *regenten* families, the nobility was eager to keep the upper middle class at distance, which it did, for instance, by inventing and cultivating specifically ‘noble’ traditions and habits in response. See: *Ibid.*

<sup>115</sup> Reality was more complex, as not all ‘prominent citizens’ were included in *Nederland’s Patriciaat*, and not all families included in this register had an equally long genealogy of dignitaries. Moes deals with this matter at great length in: *Ibid.*, 46-47, esp. note 127.

<sup>116</sup> For the Dutch context, see, e.g.: Aerts and Te Velde (eds.), *De stijl van de burger*; P.B.M. Blaas, *De burgerlijke eeuw. Over eeuwwenden, liberale burgerij en geschiedschrijving* (Hilversum 2000); J.Th.M. Bank and M.B. van Buuren, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective III. 1900: The Age of Bourgeois Culture* (Assen etc. 2004).

<sup>117</sup> E.g. in: R.A.M. Aerts, *De letterheren. Liberale cultuur in de negentiende eeuw: het tijdschrift “De Gids”* (Amsterdam 1997).

<sup>118</sup> Examples of modernists who were included in *Nederland’s Patriciaat* at the beginning of the twentieth century are: J.G. Gleichman (2, 1911); J. Knappert, L. Knappert, Miss E.C. Knappert (3, 1912); S. Baart de la Faille (4, 1913); H.Ph. de Kanter (4, 1913); H.P. Schim van der Loeff (4, 1913); A. Rutgers van der Loeff (4, 1913); K.H. Roessingh, P.H. Roessingh (4, 1913); J.F. Corstius (8, 1917); H.G. Cannegieter Dzn., T. Cannegieter (9, 1918);



class (bourgeois) background while rejecting bourgeois culture. As chapters 7 and 8 demonstrate, this applied to many a public intellectual, and many a socialist leader or politician, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In the Dutch context, the petty bourgeoisie was claimed by Abraham Kuyper as the socio-economic stratum from which he recruited his sympathisers. Kuyper cultivated an image of neo-Calvinists as '*kleine luyden*' or 'little people', who did not belong to the lowest classes, but did not identify with bourgeois culture at the same time.<sup>119</sup> Although the neo-Calvinist movement was, in socio-economical terms, primarily a (petty-)bourgeois movement indeed – yet it also had working-class and even upper-class people within its ranks –, its adherents thus distanced themselves from the socio-cultural denotation of the term 'bourgeois'.<sup>120</sup> That is to say, they opposed the politically liberal orientation intrinsic to bourgeois culture. Neo-Calvinists attached great value to education, respectability, morality, sociability and other 'bourgeois' values, but rejected the meaning attributed to these values among people in the upper strata of society.<sup>121</sup> As '*kleine luyden*', they defined themselves in opposition to an 'elite', to people who were higher on the social ladder than they themselves.<sup>122</sup> In their perception, the liberal bourgeois culture was the culture of this elite.<sup>123</sup> As I argue, a strong identification with bourgeois culture did exist in the

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B.C.J. Mosselmans (13, 1923); P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., Ph.R. Hugenholtz, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr. (14, 1924); B. Tideman Jzn. (14, 1924); and A.C. Schade van Westrum (29, 1943). The first number between brackets refers to the edition of *Nederland's Patriciaat*; the second number indicates the year of inclusion.

In the course of the nineteenth-century, an unhyphenated double surname did not remain an aristocratic prerogative. In fact, it became fashionable among upper-middle-class families to put a second surname in front of their original surname, usually a matrilineal one. Associated with the aristocracy, an unhyphenated double surname would give them an aura of respectability. In the mid-nineteenth century, theology professor Petrus Hofstede de Groot, whose surname had originally been simply 'De Groot', therefore even *urged* his students to adopt such a surname. See: K. van Berkel, *Universiteit van het Noorden: vier eeuwen academisch leven in Groningen I. De oude universiteit 1614-1876* (Hilversum 2014), 701. See also: Moes, *Onder aristocraten*, 224-229. Examples of modernist ministers with such a surname who did not belong to 'patrician' families are: J. Hooykaas Herderscheë, J. van Loenen Martinet, and M.C. van Mourik Broekman.

In Dutch, there is a higher incidence of *hyphenated* double surnames. These are usually borne by married women who put their husband's surname before their maiden name. Legally, a married woman remains registered under her maiden name. Examples mentioned in this study are: R. Joosten-Chotzen, and A.H.G. Voerman-Verkade.

<sup>119</sup> On the rhetorics of '*kleine luyden*', see: V.C. Sleebe, 'Een burgerlijke samenleving. Sociale verhoudingen en groeps-culturen', in: De Nijs and Beukers (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Holland IIIb*, 365-433, there 408; J.P.M. Koch, *Abraham Kuyper. Een biografie* (Amsterdam 2006), 310-323; P.J. Dijkman, 'Kleine luyden', in: Harinck, Paul and Wallet (eds.), *Het gereformeerde geheugen*, 153-162; G.J. Schutte, 'De kleine luyden', in: W. Bouwman et al. (eds.), *Geschiedenis van het christendom in Nederland* (Zwolle and Utrecht 2010), 188-217, there 191; A. van Helden, 'De "kleine luyden" van Abraham Kuyper. Een vorm van populistische retoriek?', *De Negentiende Eeuw XXXV.3* (2011), 139-145.

<sup>120</sup> On the petty-bourgeois character of the neo-Calvinist movement, see: Kuiper (De Bruijn, De Bruijn and Schutte eds.), *Tussen observatie en participatie*, 23-122. See also: L. Brunt, 'Over gereformeerden en kleine luyden. Enige kanttekeningen bij de voorstelling van zaken m.b.t. de afkomst en samenstelling van het huidige gereformeerde volksdeel', *Sociologische Gids XIX.1* (1972), 49-58.

<sup>121</sup> As Kuiper argues, neo-Calvinists shaped their own non-liberal version of the bourgeois civilising offensive. See: Kuiper (De Bruijn, De Bruijn and Schutte eds.), *Tussen observatie en participatie*, 356.

<sup>122</sup> It is significant in this respect that Kuyper first used the term '*kleine luyden*' in 1887, in the aftermath of a schism in the Dutch Reformed Church called '*Doleantie*'. During this schism, he and his sympathisers challenged the church authorities (the church elite, so to speak), blaming the latter for being too 'liberal'. See: H.H. van der Laan, 'De kleine luyden. Notities over de herkomst van een begrip', *Kerk en Theologie XXXIII* (1982), 41-47.

<sup>123</sup> Hendriks, *De emancipatie van de gereformeerden*, 96-103, 121-122; Koch, *Abraham Kuyper*, 311-313; H. te Velde, *Van regentenmentaliteit tot populisme. Politieke tradities in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2010), 251-254. This should not obscure that there were (relatively few) neo-Calvinists who belonged, socio-economically speaking, to the elite themselves. Yet, they too phrased their opposition against liberalism in terms of a liberal 'dominance' that had to be combatted, implying that orthodox Protestants were in a subordinate position due to their religious persuasion. Cf.: Hendriks, *De emancipatie van de gereformeerden*, 160.

modernist movement. Contrasting with the neo-Calvinist self-image as '*kleine luyden*' was modernists' self-perception as 'spiritual aristocrats'. In combination with the adjective 'spiritual', the word 'aristocrat' lacked a class-connotation in theory. As said, it did have a socio-economic implication in practice nonetheless. Being a 'spiritual aristocrat' implied belonging to the middle class proper or the social layer above it. This did not mean that every single modernist belonged to one of these social strata, but the modernist discourse of 'spiritual aristocrats' was clearly not based on a self-identification with the petty bourgeoisie (as was the notion of the '*kleine luyden*').

When using the term 'bourgeois', I therefore refer to those people who belonged, socio-economically speaking, to the middle class proper and the elite of dignitaries, *and* who explicitly identified with the 'bourgeois' culture mentioned above. Having no normative implications, the meaning attached in this study to the term 'bourgeois' comes close to that of the '*Bildungsbürgertum*', a concept with which chapter 11 deals in relation to liberal Protestantism in Germany. As this study shows, belonging to one of the higher strata of society did not necessarily mean being leading in church, state and society. In fact, starting in the *fin-de-siècle*-era, the *kleine luyden* came to set the pace in social and political life, while the modernists that those *kleine luyden* branded as 'elitist' became less and less able to exert influence.

## **7. Conceptual and Synoptic Outline – Part I: The Dutch Modernist Movement**

This study is divided into five thematic parts. The first part, comprising chapters 1 and 2, gives a contextualisation of the focal points of this study, the NPB and its weekly *De Hervorming*, within Dutch liberal Protestantism. It analyses the communicative and social functions these institutions had. The second part, encompassing chapters 3 to 5, looks at the aspiration of the modernist movement to 'modernise Christianity'. The third part, consisting of chapter 6, argues that a dominant discourse prevailed in modernist circles. It demonstrates how this discourse was distilled from an in-depth analysis of the liberal Protestant periodical press, and explains the implications that this discourse had. As such, it links the second and fourth part, the latter of which contains chapters 7 to 9, and deals with modernists' endeavour to 'Christianise society'. The fifth and last part, being composed of chapters 10 and 11, explores the international context of Dutch liberal Protestantism. This five-fold thematic structure not only brings out topical preoccupations of Dutch modernists more clearly than a mere chronological structure could do; it also prevents the reader from having to constantly switch from one discussion to another, and hence from running the risk of losing sight of the thread of each individual discussion.

Several concepts and theories have proved to be very insightful in my analysis of the roles that the NPB and *De Hervorming* had within the Dutch modernist movement, and of the discussions on church and social reform. In the following synopsis, I indicate which concepts and theories I have used as interpretative analytical 'tools' for each individual chapter. Moreover, I explain how the chapters in the second and fourth part of this study relate to the aforementioned general frame of 'modernisation'.

In chapter 1, 'The Genesis of the Modernist Movement', I argue that modernism can best be characterised in terms of a certain 'mentality', by looking at how nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Protestants who identified themselves as 'modernists' have spoken about Christianity, God, Jesus, the Bible, secular sources of knowledge and other religions. Subsequently, I explain which philosophical and theological developments helped to bring modernism into being

in the mid-nineteenth century, and why certain modernists were eager to emphasise the distinction between modern theology and the modernist movement. This chapter ends with a brief overview of the history of the latter in its formative phase – that is, until the founding of *De Hervorming* in 1873.

Chapter 2, ‘The Modernist “Tribune”’, interlaces the history of *De Hervorming* with that of the NPB. It analyses how the magazine’s editorial policy was affected by, and has exerted influence on, the course of events within the Dutch modernist movement. This chapter centres around two concepts. The first is that of the ‘imagined community’. When anthropologist Benedict Anderson coined this term in 1983, it applied to nation-states. Yet, it has now come to be used in a broader sense, referring to *any* form of collective identification that transcends the level of physical personal encounters.<sup>124</sup> On the one hand, an imagined community is ‘real’ in the sense that people feel and act to be part of a social entity in the name of which gatherings are held and for the benefit of which activities are organised. It thus visibly manifests itself in social reality. On the other hand, such a community is a product of imagination at the same time, as it is not, for the most part at least, based on face-to-face contacts.<sup>125</sup> Members of a local NPB branch had the opportunity to personally meet fellow modernist townsmen. Of the modernists living in other municipalities they would probably come to know only a handful, if any at all. Yet, because they knew that their branch was one part of a whole network, they felt connected to these ‘unknown’ fellow modernists all across the country nonetheless. Whereas the concept of the ‘imagined community’ has been applied to Dutch orthodox Protestantism, no equivalent in-depth research exists for liberal Protestantism.<sup>126</sup> This chapter makes clear in what ways *De Hervorming* contributed to the establishment and preservation of the NPB as an imagined community.

Another central concept in the second chapter is ‘sociability’. With his 1960s and 1970s studies on voluntary associations in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century France, historian M. Agulhon initiated extensive research on the materialisation of this concept in various geographical entities and time frames. Making a distinction between pre-modern or ‘traditional’ sociability, having to do with loosely organised corporations confined to local family, artisan and parish life, and ‘modern’ sociability, referring to the more institutionalised, geographically larger and ideology-based club life that emerged in the nineteenth century, Agulhon broadly describes the term as “the general aptitude of a group of people to intensively experience [their] social bonds.”<sup>127</sup> Dutch studies scholar W. van den Berg gives a more narrow definition of ‘modern’ sociability, taking it to be “the need for institutionally embedded social interaction, the cultivation of contacts with kindred spirits, and, in line with that, the tendency to undertake activities in a group context instead of on an individual basis.”<sup>128</sup> Historian of Christianity

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<sup>124</sup> The ‘pillars’ in Dutch society referred to in the introductory chapter, for example, have been studied in terms of ‘imagined communities’. E.g.: H. te Velde and J.H. Verhage, ‘Inleiding’, in: H. te Velde and J.H. Verhage (eds.), *De eenheid en de delen. Zuivorming, onderwijs en natievorming in Nederland, 1850-1900* (Amsterdam 1996), 1-12, there 4.

<sup>125</sup> B.R.O’G. Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York [1983] 2006), 6.; G.D.J. Dingemans, *In vredesnaam. Religie in een democratische samenleving* (Kampen 2007), 261.

<sup>126</sup> E.g.: J.M. Houkes, *Christelijke vaderlanders. Godsdienst, burgerschap en de Nederlandse natie 1850-1900* (Amsterdam 2009), esp. 130. For a Catholic equivalent, see: J.H. Verhage, *Katholieken, kerk en wereld. Roermond en Helmond in de lange negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum 2003), esp. 25-26.

<sup>127</sup> “L’aptitude générale d’une population à vivre intensément les relations publiques.” Quoted from: M. Agulhon, *Le cercle dans la France bourgeoise. Étude d’une mutation de sociabilité* (Paris 1977), 7.

<sup>128</sup> “...een behoefte aan onderling gezelschapsleven, een cultivering van contacten met gelijkgestemden, en in het verlengde daarvan eerder de neiging om gemeenschappelijke activiteiten te ontplooiën dan als individu te opereren.”

Mirjam de Baar used the term ‘sociability’ in the same way, when she suggested in her 2010 inaugural lecture on Unitarianism and feminism in the nineteenth century that more historical research should be done on both “the practices of (formal) group formation” and “the values and goals of club work” in Dutch liberal Protestantism. She mentioned *De Hervorming* as one of the most important, yet neglected sources to conduct such research.<sup>129</sup> In this chapter, I follow her suggestion, by showing how ‘sociability’ took concrete shape in the columns of *De Hervorming* and within the organisational frame of the NPB on both a national and local level.

## 8. Conceptual and Synoptic Outline – Part II: Modernising Christianity

The second part of this study starts with chapter 3, ‘Modernism, Orthodoxy and Self-Identification’. Modernisation brought with it a differentiation of life styles and a pluralisation within the sphere of church and religion. These processes were linked to the question of which characteristics distinguished a ‘modernist’ from other Protestants. The images that modernists had of themselves, and those that others had of modernists, were a constant topic for discussion in *De Hervorming*.<sup>130</sup> Dutch Reformed modernists questioned whether they should forge some sort of alliance with moderately orthodox fellow churchmen, in an attempt to withstand more militant and dogmatic orthodox groups. At the same time, modernists struggled to delineate their movement. This chapter elucidates why ‘modernism’ was primarily identified in opposition to ‘orthodoxy’, and how the modernist identity – or rather *identities* – took concrete shape against the background of modernists’ aim to be the standard-bearers of a modernised Christianity. Moreover, it explains why the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ gradually came to be preferred to ‘*modern*’, and which implications this ‘name change’ had.

With the political sphere becoming founded on popular sovereignty, life styles becoming more diverse and the religious domain becoming more plural, ‘modernisation’ gave birth to articulate citizens, with whom church life was confronted. It was the endeavour of the modernist movement to not only ‘purify’ the Christian faith, but also to organise Christianity in such a way that it would be fit for people living in the modern age. Orthodoxy was an obstacle in realising this within Dutch Reformed church life; it was not willing to allow all within the walls of the church to worship as they pleased. Modernists therefore discussed if it was best to leave the Dutch Reformed Church and, connected to this, what the ideal religious community should look like. In chapter 4, ‘Envisioning the Faith Community of Tomorrow’, I analyse these discussions, paying particular attention to the NPB and the Free Congregation in Amsterdam as alternatives to the existing church life, as well as to the relations between the various denominational groups of modernists.

Protestant modernism was not the only religious movement to emerge in the nineteenth century that challenged orthodox Christian views. As a manifestation of life styles becoming more individualistic and religion becoming more privatised – two of the five processes that Graf

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Quoted from: W. van den Berg, ‘Sociabiliteit, genootschappelijkheid en de orale cultus’, in: M. Spies (ed.), *Historische letterkunde. Facetten van vakbeoefening* (Groningen 1984), 151-170, there 154.

<sup>129</sup> “...de praktijken van (forme)le groepsvorming...”; “...de waarden en doelen van verenigingsactiviteit.” Quoted from: M.P.A. de Baar, *Religie en feminisme in de negentiende eeuw. Het unitarisme als inspiratiebron* (Groningen 2010), 26, 39, note 73. The quote is on p. 26.

<sup>130</sup> For self-images in NPB circles, see: T.E.M. Krijger, ‘De Nederlandse Protestantenbond: zelfportretten door de jaren heen’, *Ruimte / Mens & Tijd* 2015-01 (2015), 3-5.

collectively labels ‘modernisation’ –, a whole array of what French publicist J. Bois (1868-1943) famously called ‘*petites religions*’ (‘little religions’) came into being.<sup>131</sup> These included, among others, Spiritism, Theosophy, Christian Science, and Buddhist-like spirituality. While modernists had to deal with orthodoxy ‘to their right’, they were, to use the same metaphor, confronted with those little religions ‘to their left’.<sup>132</sup> Next to the rise of little religions, several religiously liberal tendencies seemed to manifest themselves in church and society. Moreover, the numbers of non-practising church members and people who gave up their church membership altogether, of which a minority became outright atheist, increased. In the modernist movement, these developments gave rise to a couple of questions. Could the adherents of little religions and churchless people be seen as allies in the endeavour to modernise Christian religious life, and should the modernist movement therefore explicitly target them? Was the congeniality between liberal Protestantism and the little religions perhaps even deeper, and should the modernist movement accordingly strive to incorporate the latter? Or were these merely obstacles standing in the way of a thorough reformation of religious life? Chapter 5, ‘Little Religions, ‘Liberal’ Tendencies and Atheism’, analyses the answers given to these questions.

## 9. Conceptual and Synoptic Outline – Part III: Liberal Protestant Discourse

The third part of this study coincides with chapter 6, ‘A Spiritual Aristocracy of Tutors’. I follow philosopher of history H.J. Paul by approaching *De Hervorming* as the articulator of a ‘discourse community’. In his 2007 article ‘Religious Discourse Communities’, Paul tries to answer the question of “what kind of liberal or orthodox Protestant alliances the nineteenth century saw emerge.”<sup>133</sup> According to him, the concepts of ‘imagined community’ and ‘community of memory’ give an insufficient answer to this question. In Dutch Protestantism in the second half of the nineteenth century, theological and ecclesiological controversies came to pervade congregational life more than ever before, leading to the development of ‘factions’ or ‘currents’ that ultimately turned into national ‘movements’ through the foundation of countrywide organisations, such as the orthodox *Confessioneele Vereeniging* (Confessional Association) and the liberal NPB.<sup>134</sup> These both helped to bring into being, and represented, ‘imagined communities’ in the Andersonian sense described above. Yet, all members of the Confessional Association and most members of the Dutch League of Protestants also identified themselves as being part of a larger ‘imagined community’: the Dutch Reformed Church. Apparently, both orthodox and modernists imagined belonging, on a meta-level, to the *same* community. It is thus impossible to maintain that orthodoxy and the modernist movement were *strictly separated, diametrically opposed* imagined communities. Moreover, the Confessional Association and, to an even greater extent, the NPB had a central position in orthodoxy and modernism respectively, but could not claim *all* orthodox and modernists as their members. This complicates matters, as the modernist movement was larger than the imagined community that was the NPB, while NPB members and other modernists nonetheless both felt that they belonged to the *same* community.

<sup>131</sup> This term was coined in: J. Bois, *Les petites religions de Paris* (Paris 1894).

<sup>132</sup> As early as the late nineteenth century, it was common practice to speak about the relation between modernism and orthodoxy in terms of ‘left’ and ‘right’ respectively.

<sup>133</sup> Quoted from: H.J. Paul, ‘Religious Discourse Communities. Confessional Differentiation in Nineteenth-Century Dutch Protestantism’, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Religions- und Kulturgeschichte* CI (2007), 107-122, there 109.

<sup>134</sup> These are the examples Paul uses himself. See: *Ibid.*, 109.

The concept of ‘community of memory’ is an equally inadequate explanatory concept. The collective historical memory of orthodox and modernist people did not necessarily differ. As Paul demonstrates, Scholten and Kuyper, the ‘patriarchs’ of Dutch modernism and orthodox neo-Calvinism respectively, both regarded themselves to be theological descendants of John Calvin (1509-1564). They identified with and oriented themselves towards the same historical figure.<sup>135</sup> As has been previously stated, neo-Calvinists and modernists both identified with the sixteenth-century Reformers, both claiming to be the latter’s ‘true heirs’. They thus legitimised their existence as a group by making a similar appeal to history. Paul concludes that looking at Dutch Protestantism in terms of ‘imagined communities’ and ‘communities of memory’ cannot fully explain the nineteenth-century process of organised factional differentiation, all the more because these concepts cannot do enough justice to differences existing *within* orthodoxy and modernism. ‘Right-wing modernists’, an example Paul uses himself, still imagined that they belonged to the same meta-community as other modernists, and had not solely emerged as a result of an interpretation of Protestant history that differed from the one of these other modernists.<sup>136</sup> They were nonetheless recognisable as a distinct community within the modernist movement at large.

Paul therefore introduces the concept of ‘discourse community’ in the field of church and religion. Building on the scholarly work of linguist J. Swales, Paul defines a ‘discourse community’ as “a group of people who discuss their shared interests through written communication and are recognizable as a community only through their channels of communication.”<sup>137</sup> Whereas, concerning orthodoxy and the modernist movement, there was a partial overlap between imagined communities – as said, many understood themselves to be members of the Confessional Association or the NPB *and* at the same time of the Dutch Reformed Church –, as well as between the collective memory of both groups – they both commemorated the same historical figures and events –, there was no such overlap between their discourse communities. After all, orthodox and modernists used different ‘channels’ or ‘media’ of communication – that is, different magazines and different meeting platforms to communicate their message. The concept allows for differentiating between people who imagined that they belonged to the same organised community, without pointing to controversies over collective memory as an explanation for these internal differences. Paul sees ‘modernism’ and ‘orthodoxy’ as large discourse communities, encompassing several smaller discourse communities. He takes modernism as an example to make his point:

Discourse communities can overlap, interact and be part of larger communities. Socialist modernism, for example, can be conceived of as a discourse community gathered around *De Blijde Wereld* (*The Joyous World*). But this community, in turn, was part of a larger modernist discourse community, associated with *De Hervorming* (*The Reformation*) [...]. [A] study of confessional differentiation along communicative lines, rather than along the lines of memory alone, allows for distinctions between ‘socialist modernism’, as a small, journal-based discourse community, and ‘modernism’ as a larger type of discourse community, constituted by the *De Blijde Wereld* group and a variety of other small discourse communities.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-114.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>137</sup> Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>138</sup> Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 115. Paul wrongly assumes that “Gustaaf A. van den Bergh van Eysinga (1874-1957) turned [*De Hervorming*] into another socialist-oriented periodical.” Van den Bergh van Eysinga has never been editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming*, whereas this magazine has never officially aligned itself with political socialism.

A visualisation may help to elucidate what Paul means:

*De Blijde Wereld*



(Each circle represents a discourse community.)

To this picture, other small discourse communities could be added. For example, Dutch Reformed liberals, partly united in their own church-based organisation and centred around their own magazine as of the early 1900s, and ‘right-wing modernists’, could be included in the picture as circles that partly overlapped with *De Blijde Wereld* circle, partly with *De Hervorming* circle, partly with each other, and partly with no other circle. Being the magazine affiliated to the central NPB and giving a platform to “every [modernist] who has something to say and knows how to say it,”<sup>139</sup> *De Hervorming* embodied the modernist discourse community at large, in which all smaller discourse communities existing within the modernist movement were united:

*De Blijde Wereld*



Right-wing modernists

(Each circle represents a discourse community.)

It was in *De Hervorming* that all small modernist discourse communities entered into discussion with each other.<sup>140</sup> In line with Paul, I argue that the modernist movement at large was embodied

<sup>139</sup> “...elk uit onze kringen, die iets heeft te zeggen en het te zeggen weet...” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Een nieuw begin’, *De Hervorming* 1898-02 (8 January 1898), 5. See also: Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 56.

<sup>140</sup> Following Paul, historian De Lange identifies the burgeoning modernist movement between 1858 and 1859 as a discourse community that was grouped around the aforementioned magazine *Teekenen des Tijds*. See: A. de Lange, “‘Hij is een man van fantasie’”. J.H. Gunning jr. en de modernen in de jaren 1850’, in: Van Driel and Houkes (eds.), *Het vrijzinnige web*, 21-38. In these years, *Teekenen des Tijds* thus had a similar role as *De Hervorming* would have in later years: as the medium of communication through which the modernist community found expression. Van Lieburg uses the term ‘imagined community’ to refer to the Dutch Reformed Church and the term ‘discourse communities’ to refer to the different organised currents existing within the Dutch Reformed Church. He takes the orthodox, anti-Kuyperian *Confessionele Vereeniging* as an example of a discourse community. See: F.A. van Lieburg, ‘Jan Rap en zijn kerk. De missie van de confessioneel-hervormde beweging’, in: J. Roelevink and J.D.Th. Wassenaar (eds.), *Belijdend onderweg. Confessionele Vereniging 1864-2014* (Zoetermeer 2014), 105-129, there 118-122.

as an imagined community by the NPB, and shaped as a discourse community by *De Hervorming*. A merit of this last concept is that it further accentuates the importance that *De Hervorming* had in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Dutch modernism. But what exactly was the discourse of which this magazine was the articulator?

Paul does not say anything about that. In his 2007 article, he suggests a concept that can adequately typify both the formation of large communities within Protestantism, such as ‘modernism’, and inner-group formation within these communities, such as ‘right-wing modernism’, and suggests that media of communication instead of mere institutions or invented traditions of collective memory served as the principal identity markers. He does not concern himself with the actual discourses these communities used. I, however, am interested in the discourse of one of these communities, the modernist movement centred around its main channel of communication, *De Hervorming*.

On the basis of an integral and systematic analysis of this magazine and other channels of communication used in the modernist movement, I argue that there was a dominant discourse in modernist circles (to which I refer, as mentioned above, with the concept of the ‘spiritual aristocracy of tutors’). In this respect, insights from ‘critical discourse analysis’ have been useful. Although I am not concerned with the aim of critical discourse analysis to expose the exertion of power in written communication – I do realise that the editors-in-chief of *De Hervorming* had a potentially very powerful position within the modernist discourse community, but the large amount of contributions to the magazine from others, also from those who disagreed with them, counterbalanced this –, critical discourse analysis has impressed upon me that the words and phrases people use when they are engaged in a discussion with each other depends on the context, that (hidden) ideologies or world views can be traced by deconstructing the way in which people use words and phrases, and that discourse contains implicit normative notions about social action.<sup>141</sup> In chapter 6, I explain what I mean by ‘a spiritual aristocracy of tutors’.

## **10. Conceptual and Synoptic Outline – Part IV: Christianising Modern Society**

Chapter 7, ‘Conquering the Lower Classes’, inaugurates the fourth part of this study. It shows the consequences this discourse had for the way in which the modernist movement manifested itself in society and dealt with social phenomena. The effects of capitalist industrialisation on society, such as poor working and living conditions, the disruption of working-class family life, and pauperisation, gave rise to an international public debate on what was called ‘the social question’. The organised socialist labour movement emerged in response to this question and tried to counteract what it perceived as social injustice. Modernists also felt that social wrongs could not be tolerated; in their eyes, society would become a better place if it were to become ‘Christianised’ in a liberal Protestant sense. There were vivid discussions on the question of how the modernist movement should pursue this goal, and on the related question as to how it should approach the lower classes. This chapter reflects on these discussions. In addition, it analyses how the modernist movement was perceived within the socialist labour movement and *vice versa*.

Chapter 8, ‘Captivating the Intellectual Class’, demonstrates that the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors also had repercussions on the treatment that the modernist movement

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<sup>141</sup> C.K.M. von Stuckrad, *The Scientification of Religion. A Historical Study of Discursive Change, 1800-2000* (Boston 2014), 3-14.



received from so-called ‘intellectuals’. It does so by analysing the views on liberal Protestantism of then leading publicists and belletrists, in whose writings contemporary trends in cultural and intellectual life found expression, as well as modernists’ reactions to their writings.

Chapter 9, ‘Becoming a Pillaret’, dives into debates on the question of whether modernists had to organise themselves separately in society in order to aspire after their aim to Christianise society. This question was raised as a result of the modernisation processes of structural differentiation and the privatisation of religion. In early-modern society, the state had privileged one church over the others – the Dutch Reformed Church in the context of the Netherlands –, whose values and norms were the ‘cement’ of social life in its entirety. This meant that the privileged church had not only been intertwined with the state, but also with other ‘secular spheres’, such as commerce and science. The process of modernisation led to the separation of church and state, and the release of the ‘secular spheres’ from church involvement. On a more abstract level, a division began to emerge between a ‘public’ and a ‘private’ domain.<sup>142</sup> With the church now being just one sphere among equal others, the position of religion became problematic. What role was religion allowed to play in the public domain? In the Netherlands, neo-Calvinists and Roman Catholics answered this question by founding a network of interconnected faith-based organisations in all segments of social life. As this chapter shows, modernists were more troubled with that question.

## **11. Conceptual and Synoptic Outline – Part V: The International Context**

The fifth part of this study begins with chapter 10, ‘Fields Ripe for Harvest?’, which zooms in on the periodically discussed issue of foreign mission. Some argued that foreign mission should be included in the aim of the modernist movement to Christianise society, for ‘society’ did not halt at the Dutch borders. Particularly among the first generation of modernists, there was a manifest belief that Christianity in its liberal Protestant form was destined to develop into the universal religion uniting mankind. Moreover, modernists tended to equate their faith with civilisation and modernisation. A minority therefore insisted that modernists had the obligation and vocation to bring non-Christian peoples into contact with liberal Protestantism. This chapter shows that these modernists used the discourse of ‘a spiritual aristocracy of tutors’ to convince fellow modernists who were opposed or indifferent to foreign mission, thereby further elucidating what this discourse implied.

The international context of the Dutch modernist movement was not limited to discussions on foreign mission; it also included similar movements abroad. The NPB was the Dutch link in a chain of liberal religious associations on both sides of the Atlantic and even beyond. Several of those associations were, just as the NPB itself, modelled on the German *Protestantenverein*, founded in 1863 to enhance a free development of religious life. Most of those still existing at the time ultimately formalised their ties by joining the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom (IARF) in the 1930s. In chapter 11, ‘The International Liberal Protestant “Family”’, the development of liberal Protestant groups outside of the Netherlands is compared to that of the Dutch modernist movement. In addition, this chapter pays attention to the means through which modernists in the Netherlands kept in contact with co-religionists abroad.

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<sup>142</sup> J. Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago and London 1994), esp. 41-43.

# **PART I**

## The Dutch Modernist Movement



*De Hervorming* through the years.



Emblem of the NPB used in the early twentieth century.

# 1. THE GENESIS OF THE MODERNIST MOVEMENT

## 1. 'The First Characterisation of Modernism'<sup>1</sup>

"I, for one, shall rely on the form of authority, which the Protestant Church – with the exception of the modern theologians – has always recognised and respected – and for good reasons."<sup>2</sup> In 1858, these words were uttered in an anonymously published brochure that led to some turmoil in the Dutch theological and ecclesial domain.<sup>3</sup> The author of the booklet, quickly identified as D.Th. Huet (1790-1874), then a minister in the Dutch Reformed congregation in Rotterdam, had felt the urge to reach for his pen to warn Protestants all across the Netherlands against the emergence of a new theological current.<sup>4</sup> Huet was probably the first to designate this current with the adjective 'modern' or 'modernist'.<sup>5</sup>

In his brochure, the moderately orthodox Huet gave his readers seven *wenken* (warnings), in which he gave a characterisation of the theology he branded as 'modernist' and set this characterisation against what he saw as 'true' Protestantism. First, he juxtaposed modernists' glorification of individual autonomy in doctrinal matters with the 'time-honoured' notion of authority. Arguing that most laymen lacked "the necessary knowledge, the strength of mind, the intellectual development, the lust for study, the correct knowledge of man's ethical needs, the time and the resources to absorb the Evangelical truth independently" and fearing that laymen would fall into idle unbelief if they were to be involved in exegetical issues, Huet chided modernists for claiming that faith ought not to be based on authority *a priori* attributed to the Bible. However, the basic thought of Protestantism, Huet argued, is that the authority of the Bible is indeed given, because it is the Word of God. Ministers assist the faithful in reading the Bible and explain to them the doctrinal framework through which the Bible should be interpreted. Just as an ill person should not try to cure himself, but needs to consult a general practitioner, a churchgoer should not arrogate the role of exegete to himself and respect the authority of his minister in doctrinal matters.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Called as such in: I.M.J. Hoog, 'Uit het kerkelijk leven voor 60 jaar', *Theologisch Tijdschrift* XLIII (1909), 113-137, there 113.

<sup>2</sup> "Ik, op mijne beurt, blijf nog altijd vertrouwen stellen op een gezag, dat de Protestantsche Kerk – de moderne theologanten niet medegerekend – steeds erkend en geëerbiedigd heeft, en zulks voorwaar niet zonder goede redenen." Quoted from: [D.Th. Huet], *Wenken opzigtelijk moderne theologie* (The Hague 1858), 15. A second edition was issued later that year.

<sup>3</sup> A critical review was published in: D. Harting, 'Boekbeoordelingen en verslagen', *Nieuwe Jaarboeken voor Wetenschappelijke Theologie* I (1858), 405-412. The brochure received critical acclaim in: 'Boekaankondiging', *Ernst en Vrede* VI (1858), 292. A counterattack against Huet was made in: *Brief aan een vriend naar aanleiding van de "Wenken opzigtelijk moderne theologie"* (Kampen 1859). The controversy following the publication of the brochure was mocked in: 'Kerknieuws', *De Nederlandsche Spectator* 1859-03 (16 January 1859), 11-12; 1859-21 (22 May 1859), 84.

<sup>4</sup> E.J.W. Koch, 'Berigten', *Godgeleerde Bijdragen* XXXII.1 (1858), 517-522; J.T. Bergman, 'Levensschets van Daniel Théodore Huet', in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1873-1874* II. *Levensberichten* (Leiden 1874), 113-132, there 125, note 1.

<sup>5</sup> Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 124-125, 206-207; M.A.P., 'Ingezonden stukken – "Moderne richting", "moderne theologie"', *De Hervorming* 1908-42 (17 October 1908), 335; C.G. Chavannes, 'Of-óf', *Ibid.* 1909-01 (2 January 1909), 3-4, there 4; Brouwer, *De moderne richting*, 7-9; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 14.

<sup>6</sup> "...die de vereischte kunde, geestkracht, verstandelijke ontwikkeling, zucht tot onderzoek, juiste kennis van 's menschen zedelijke behoefte, tijd en hulpmiddelen bezitten, om de Evangelische waarheid zelfstandig in zich op te nemen." This paragraph is a paraphrase of: [Huet], *Wenken opzigtelijk moderne theologie*, 1-16. The quote is on p. 9.

Second, Huet reasoned that, as the rapid developments within academia – of which modern theology itself was a result – proved, scholarly knowledge was anything but fixed. Was there any certainty that statements modern theologians made would still be valid in ten or even five years? Modern theology, Huet implied, was too dependent on scientific and scholarly insights to explain the Bible in a way that strengthened people's faith. Third, Huet considered modernists' repudiation of miracles, as supernatural interventions from God in everyday reality, to be an expression of haughtiness: God's ability to act is not limited by man's power of imagination. Moreover, Huet professed not to understand why modern theologians believed that God was supreme and that this supremacy had enabled Him to structure nature according to some immutable laws, while they apparently also believed that God imposed the restriction upon Himself never to disrespect those laws. If God were still supreme, why would it be impossible for Him to surpass or bypass the laws of nature, to act *supernaturally*, whenever He wanted to?

Fourth, Huet abhorred modernists' de-deification of the name-giver of Christianity. It was no coincidence that he placed this abhorrence at the centre of his argument: this was the single biggest grievance he had against modernist theology. Stating that Jesus Christ was only a human being without any divine features yet a *perfect* human being – as, according to Huet, modern theologians did – was an inconsistency: 'being human' and 'being perfect' mutually exclude each other. What is more, there was no rational motivation to separate one man from the rest of mankind as being 'more perfect' than others. Someone could only regard Jesus as being 'most perfect', when he acknowledged that the Bible, or at least the Gospel, was a special kind of divine revelation. And this, Huet accentuated, was exactly what modern theologians denied. Fifth, Huet argued that ministers should not make improper use of the pulpit as a lectern from which they could spread questionable ideas. It was their sole task to strengthen the faith of their parishioners and apply Scriptural narratives to their own time. Biblical parables have high value in themselves, Huet contended, whether they are historically accurate or not.

Sixth, Huet blamed modern theologians for frenetically trying to reject all elements of Christianity that are beyond human comprehension, so that it could develop into the universal religion of mankind. Yet, without these elements, particularly without a supernatural Christ, the claim that Christianity is not just *a* religion next to others, but *the* religion in which humanity finds its true fulfilment, cannot be substantiated. After all, insofar as non-Christian religions, stripped of their supernatural aura, also contain ideas congruous with human consciousness, it could equally be claimed that humanity finds its true fulfilment in one of those religions. Finally, Huet warned that by rejecting the authority of Scripture, modern theologians prepared the triumph of Roman Catholicism over Protestantism; not only because Protestants would be unable to make a united front against Catholicism if each and every one of them had a different idea of what 'Truth' was, but also because those Protestants who were incapable of developing a personal conception of God and a personal outlook on life would be attracted by the systematic, simple and sentimental teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>7</sup>

Huet's brochure was the first of many in which modernist ministers were accused of demolishing the Christian faith. As was historically the case with 'Christian' and 'Protestant',<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> The above three paragraphs are a paraphrase of: *Ibid.*, 17-48.

<sup>8</sup> P. Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Tübingen 2004), 559; K.G. Appold, *The Reformation. A Brief History* (Malden etc. 2011), 137.

the adjective ‘modernist’ was meant to be a pejorative term, but the theologians at whom Huet aimed his criticism immediately adopted it as an honorary title.<sup>9</sup> This chapter attempts to characterise modernists’ religious convictions. Indeed, it *attempts* to do so, as it is difficult and rather inadequate to speak in generalising terms about modernism. ‘Modernism’ is an umbrella term covering a wide array of views, while, as chapter 3 shows, some of the characteristics of modernism analysed below came to be nuanced or even challenged among later generations of modernists. It is therefore perhaps better to say that this chapter gives a characterisation of ‘classic’ or, as it was called in the twentieth century, ‘old-school’ modernism – that is, modernism as it developed during its formative phase. Modernist critique of old-school modernism is dealt with in chapters where it is relevant to do so. This chapter focuses on the philosophical and theological influences that helped to bring modern theology into being. Finally, it sketches the emergence and development of modern theology and the modernist movement up to the founding of *De Hervorming* in 1873.

## 2. A Characterisation of Modernism

Every answer given to the question of what ‘modernism’ or ‘liberal Protestantism’ is will be contestable, not only because it is always a simplification to speak about any group in generalisations, but also, in this particular case, because those who identified as ‘modernists’ had difficulty in making clear what exactly ‘modernism’ was. There were no particular beliefs or institutional affiliations someone needed to have in order to be accepted as a modernist by others who also identified as ‘modernists’. In practice, a modernist simply was everyone who identified as such. Other contemporary groups in Dutch Protestantism had less of an open character, making it less difficult to typify them than modernists. Neo-Calvinists, to take the example already used in the introductory chapter, did not entirely agree with each other on every theological issue – more than that, there were heated discussions among them on exegetical and doctrinal matters, ultimately leading to two schisms in the first half of the twentieth century –, and did not unanimously praise Kuyper for everything he did or thought. Yet, they all adhered to the same creeds – in their case the so-called ‘Three Forms of Unity’, comprising the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt –, were all grouped together in the *Anti-Revolutionaire Partij* (Anti-Revolutionary Party or ARP) and, after 1892, in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, tended to separately organise themselves and other orthodox Protestants in social life, and had, in the person of Kuyper, a figure who stood in the centre of their movement.<sup>10</sup> A historian or theologian who wants to characterise neo-Calvinists thus has at least a few points of reference on which he can base his characterisation and on the basis of which he can portray a ‘typical’ neo-Calvinist. By contrast, there was no creed unanimously accepted by modernists, modernist church life extended over several church denominations, modernists were very reluctant to establish organisations of their own, and no one among modernists had a position similar to that of Kuyper in neo-Calvinist circles.

Perhaps it is best to look at modernists, metaphorically speaking, in terms of a ‘family’. Those who felt to be part of the modernist ‘family’ did not share exactly similar conceptions

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<sup>9</sup> Brouwer, *De moderne richting*, 7-8.

<sup>10</sup> The Anti-Revolutionary Party also had support outside of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Members of this church denomination nonetheless dominated it.

of God, a similar political persuasion, or similar ideas about society, but they did have, on an abstract level, some features in common with which they showed themselves to be members of this family, and that distinguished them from members of other ‘families’ within Protestantism. Their beliefs, different as they were, had common roots – or, to put it more precisely, were rooted in a shared historical-critical approach to the Bible, a shared rejection of a supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity, the shared ideal to modernise Christianity and to permeate society with this modernised Christianity, and the shared ideal of a truly *personal* faith.

One of the characteristics of modernists was that their interpretation of the Bible was based on historical-critical methodology. The Bible had been studied historically-critically prior to the mid-nineteenth century, prompted by questions about the authorship of certain biblical books and the existence of inner-textual incongruities.<sup>11</sup> For example, German philosopher H.S. Reimarus (1694-1768), famously portrayed by A. Schweitzer (1875-1965) as the ‘patriarch’ of higher criticism,<sup>12</sup> had already disregarded the stories of the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt and the resurrection of Jesus as historically accurate, but he did not impugn the traditional view that the biblical books were meant to be historical documents. To quote theologian D.J. Hawkin, “what [Reimarus] challenged was their veracity, not their historical intent.”<sup>13</sup> According to Reimarus, the content of some biblical texts was clearly distorted, but they still, in some way or another, referred to historical occurrences. In the mid-nineteenth century, however, some theologians began to question whether the Old and New Testaments should be classified within the genre of history at all.

As a book in which the religion of ancient Israel is documented, a book in which the spiritual realm of thought of Jesus’ disciples and the first congregations of his worshippers are written down, the Bible did possess authority for modernists, but not *a priori* and not because all the biblical words were supposed to be God-given in any way. On the contrary, biblical stories, modern theologians argued, are only authoritative insofar as they appeal to individual religious sentiments. A lot of texts in the Old Testament, depicting an envious, irascible and wrathful Yahweh, and in the New Testament, dealing with extrasensory miracles Jesus is said to have performed, do not and cannot fulfil this piety-inducing role, as they are, in their literal sense, illogical, irrational or even offensive.<sup>14</sup> Being first and foremost a product of literary imagination, the Bible is not primarily intended to be a book that can sustain questions about its historicity. Rather, it should be seen as a genre in its own right, made up of a mixture of actual history, poetic licence, prophecies, fantasy and ageless wisdoms. The Bible and the Word of God, the latter meaning the self-revelation of the Supreme Being or the Highest Power in His relation to human beings, therefore do not coincide with each other. Instead,

<sup>11</sup> Law, *The Historical-Critical Method*, 25-52.

<sup>12</sup> In: A. Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede. Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen 1906).

<sup>13</sup> D.J. Hawkin, *Christ and Modernity. Christian Self-Understanding in a Technological Age* (Waterloo 1985), 31.

<sup>14</sup> Extensively dealing with miracles are: A. Pierson, *De oorsprong der moderne rigting* (Haarlem 1862); A.T. Reitsma, *Voor en tegen de moderne theologie. Beantwoording mijner tegenschrijvers en handhaving der beginselen, uitgesproken in mijne voorlezingen over de moderne theologie* (Groningen 1863); J.C. Zaalberg, *De godsdienst van Jezus en de moderne rigting. Christelijke toespraken over de godsdienstige vragen des tijds* (The Hague 1864), 189-220; J.C. Matthes, *De nieuwe richting. Een leesboek voor de gemeente van dezen tijd* (Groningen [1866] 1867); J.H. Scholten, *Supranaturalisme in verband met Bijbel, Christendom en protestantisme. Eene vraag des tijds* (Leiden 1867); B.W. Colenbrander, *Geen fabelen. Een boek voor het volk, bevattende opmerkingen over de wonderen van den Bijbel* (Harlingen 1868). See also: M.N.J. Moltzer, *Wat zegt gij van de moderne richting?* (Haarlem 1871).

who God is, and what the purpose of human existence is, are concealed behind the verbatim biblical texts and are reflected in nature. Biblical narratives are no more than historically conditioned efforts to make a-historical statements about human encounters with the divine comprehensible for a particular group of people in a given context. Biblical imagery was adapted to the specific historical setting of ancient Israel and the intellectual grasp of its inhabitants. The Israelites and the people surrounding them, who were being targeted in the Gospel by the Evangelists, did not have the knowledge about the natural order of things and the cultural refinement that nineteenth-century scholars had or at least claimed to have. The conceptual universe of the former had been of a 'lower order' than that of the latter.<sup>15</sup>

Contrary to the orthodox Christian view that humans are inherently sinful because they all share in the misfortune Adam called down upon himself by disregarding God's regulations in the Garden of Eden, and consequently need to accept Christ as their Redeemer, the inner nature of man was looked upon with less abhorrence in modernism. Not all modernists were equally optimistic in this respect and some, who came to be known as *malcontenten* (malcontents) and later as *rechts-modernen* (right-wing modernists; the word 'right-wing' having no political connotation whatsoever) in the Netherlands in the early decades of the twentieth century, even firmly upheld the dialectic relationship between the perfect God and imperfect man.<sup>16</sup> What all modernists did have in common was that they were, to a greater or lesser extent, convinced of the ability of man to seek contact with God *on his own strength*. In orthodoxy, man was said to be unable to approach God by his own achievement or without the mediation of Jesus Christ, thereby stressing the transcendence or otherworldliness of God, but in modernism a stronger emphasis was placed on the immanent divine 'spark' glowing inside every human being. God should not be seen as an entity standing in opposition to humans and the world they live in. On the contrary, reality is not divided into an otherworldly, unobservable 'spiritual sphere' and a visible 'realm of the senses' regulated by the laws of nature, in which God can interfere. God is *in* this world and although he is more than the sum of its parts, he is

<sup>15</sup> E.g.: [H. Oort in:] 'Zevende Protestantendag', *De Hervorming* 1879-45 (8 November 1879), 178-179, there 179; 'Godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1880-35 (28 August 1880), 137-138; J.H. Maronier, 'Binnenland – Tweede samenkomen van dames', *Ibid.* 1880-48 (27 November 1880), 190; E. Snellen, 'Zoek het geluk niet in de verte', *Ibid.* 1881-46 (19 November 1881), 185-186; X., 'Binnenland – Een hedendaagsch steekspel', *Ibid.* 1882-05 (4 February 1882), 19; B.B., 'Blijmoedig vertrouwen', *Ibid.* 1887-33 (13 August 1887), 129-130; E. Snellen, 'De Bijbelsche wonderverhalen en het gemoedsleven onzer kinderen', *Ibid.* 1888-01 (1 January 1888), 1-2, there 2 [erroneously dated '1 January 1887']; H. de Lang, 'Het Oude Testament en de godsdienstige opvoeding onzer jeugd', *Ibid.* 1888-10 (10 March 1888), 38; 1888-11 (17 March 1888), 42; 1888-12 (24 March 1888), 46; 1888-13 (31 March 1888), 50; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Onze verhouding tot den Bijbel', *Ibid.* 1895-50 (14 December 1895), 197-198; A.C. Leendertz, 'Ingezonden stukken – De Bijbel', *Ibid.* 1896-05 (1 February 1896), 19-20; J. Herman de Ridder, 'Ingezonden stukken – Bijbelkritiek', *Ibid.* 1898-17 (23 April 1898), 67; H. Oort, 'Eene dankbetuiging met een wensch', *Ibid.* 1901-14 (6 April 1901), 106; C.E. Hooykaas, "'Jahwe" of "de Heere"', *Ibid.* 1906-10 (10 March 1906), 73-74; C.E. Hooykaas, 'Ons standpunt ten opzichte van het Oude Testament', *Ibid.* 1906-11 (17 March 1906), 81-82; C.E. Hooykaas, 'Nog eenmaal: de actie voor de Leidsche Vertaling', *Ibid.* 1906-37 (15 September 1906), 290-291; E.M. ten Cate, 'Bij de voltooidte verkorte uitgave der Leidsche vertaling van het O.T.', *Ibid.* 1907-31 (3 August 1907), 242-243; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Van de bijbelsche wonderwereld', *Ibid.* 1912-11 (16 March 1912), 83-84; H.J. Toxopeüs, 'Het practische gebruik van het Nieuwe Testament', *Ibid.* 1912-27 (6 July 1912), 211-212; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Een Kinderbijbel', *Ibid.* 1917-21 (26 May 1917), 171-172; H. de Lang, 'Kunst en letteren – Voor kinderen. Voor jongelieden niet', *Ibid.* 1918-42 (19 October 1918), 166-167; H. Bakels, *Wij kettters – ja, "om de eere Gods"!* *Opgedragen aan alle gereformeerde jongelui* (Haarlem 1920), 27-38; A.C. Schade van Westrum, *Het goed recht en de waarde van het modern-godsdienstig geloof* (Groningen 1921), 9-10.

<sup>16</sup> C.G. Chavannes, 'Mijmeringen VIII. Onze malcontenten', *Teekenen des Tijds* VI (1904), 380-403; K.H. Roesingh, *Rechts-modernisme* (Haarlem 1918).



not *outside* of it – modernists’ adage was that the divine is *bovenzinnelijk* (supersensory), not *bovennatuurlijk* (supernatural).<sup>17</sup> There is no ‘barrier’ humans need to pass over to be able to experience the presence of God in reality, but cannot cross on their own, without mediation, because of their innate unworthiness.

Modernists were convinced that man should not believe on the basis of others’ testimonies of faith – those of the authors or protagonists of biblical texts, the writers of creeds, clergymen –, but that he should be guided by his own inner voice. Man’s conscience was believed to re-echo the voice of God. Modernists did acknowledge that not every individual gave proof of the same degree of intrinsic refinement, but they were optimistic about man’s perfectibility and potential for ethical self-improvement nonetheless. After all, the course of history revealed a clearly discernible, evolutionary process of ever-increasing intellectual, moral and religious progression. On the other hand, history and everyday experience continuously gave evidence of human failings as well. These should not be interpreted as consequences of inborn sinfulness, but rather as deficiencies in the inner nature of the individual concerned, as a result of his not yet fully developed spiritual potential.<sup>18</sup>

Early modernists’ outlook on life sketched here is referred to as ‘monism’. Put briefly, monism is based on the theorem that God is the all-pervasive energetic force that permeates the entire universe and the ultimate unity that holds together all separate components of reality – not to be confused with the ‘pantheistic’ idea that God and nature totally coincide, leading to a ‘deification’ of nature<sup>19</sup> – and that there is, consequently, no spatial distinction between a supernatural realm and nature.<sup>20</sup> God is not seen as a *deus ex machina*, who manually crosses the border between these separate domains through supernatural acts, but is believed to make Himself known *within* human beings. Man does not need the mediation of a priest, saints, the church or the words of Scripture to be able to approach and encounter God.

<sup>17</sup> E.g.: C.W. Opzoomer, *De geest der nieuwe rigting. Redevoering, ter opening der akademische lessen* (Amsterdam 1862), 16, 27; Matthes, *De nieuwe richting*, 8; W. Muurling, *Resultaten van onderzoek en ervaring op godsdienstig gebied* II (Groningen 1867), 9; J. Knappert, ‘Onderscheid tusschen modernen’, *De Hervorming* 1875-22 (3 June 1875), 3; J. Knappert, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-35 (1 September 1877), 4; W. Zaalberg, ‘Onze samenkomsten’, *Ibid.* 1881-35 (3 September 1881), 138; Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting*, 282.

<sup>18</sup> Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 135-146, 163-165, 179-182.

<sup>19</sup> Yet, there were some modernists with pantheistic views, such as ministers P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., L.A. Bähler and J.C. Wannée (1879-1946), teacher of religion C. Sparnaay and minister-lawyer F.C.M. Boenders. H. Bakels argued that Hugenholtz’s ideas were not really pantheistic, as the latter continued to believe in a self-conscious God. Hugenholtz responded by claiming that he considered ‘God’ to be the ‘soul’ permeating reality – to him, God was everything *in* everything. The difference between him and most other modernists, he concluded, was that he did not believe in a *personal* God. See: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Ethisch pantheïsme* (Amsterdam 1903); L.A. Bähler, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1904-07 (13 February 1904), 54; H. Bakels, ‘Het “ethisch pantheïsme” van P.H. Hugenholtz Jr.’, *Ibid.* 1907-45 (9 November 1907), 354-355; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Nog eens “ethisch pantheïsme”’, *Ibid.* 1907-46 (16 November 1907), 365-366; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Een vroom pantheïst’, *Ibid.* 1910-09 (26 February 1910), 65-66; 1910-10 (5 March 1910), 74-75; 1910-11 (12 March 1910), 81-82; J. Allanson Picton (L.A. Bähler ed.), *Het pantheïsme, zijn geschiedenis en zijn beteekenis* ([Baarn] 1912); L.A. Bähler, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Over de onvolmaaktheid in den Volmaakte’, *De Hervorming* 1918-37 (14 September 1918), 145; C. Sparnaay, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Een nabetrachting’, *Ibid.* 1918-47 (23 November 1918), 185; G. Hulsman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – “Religieuze levens- en wereldbeschouwing. Los van het Christendom”’, *Ibid.* 1920-52 (31 December 1920), 206. Boenders called himself a ‘pantheistic modernist’ in: F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Vereeniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen’, *Ibid.* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 52.

<sup>20</sup> Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 189-190; Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 30-31.

A close scrutiny of the Bible, based on methodological principles derived from philology, archaeology, geology, linguistics and physics, proved that the Bible contradicted itself on numerous occasions. This had been noticed before, but contrary to their predecessors, modern theologians did not feel the need to harmonise Biblical antinomies with each other. Quite the reverse; the inconsistencies and errors documented in the Bible revealed that the Old and New Testaments were products of human imagination, thereby indicating that the verbatim texts of the Bible and the actual meaning of these texts should not be confused with each other. The Gospel may give rise to the thought that Jesus regarded himself to be the Messiah, but they do not contain any words that Jesus had written down himself. Some modernists therefore doubted whether this carpenter's son from Galilee considered himself to be God-turned-human at all or whether this was an image projected upon him by the Evangelists.<sup>21</sup> A fraction of them, from the late 1870s onwards largely united in the so-called 'Dutch Radical School', even questioned whether Jesus the Nazarene had existed at all, and denied that the apostle Paul had written any of the letters attributed to him.<sup>22</sup> Most modernists did accept that there had been a man named Jesus from the town of Nazareth walking around in Palestine during the prefectural reign of Pontius Pilate. All of them rejected, in one way or another, the orthodox Christian view of the historical Jesus. In their view, the historical Jesus had undoubtedly been in close contact with God the Father, albeit not as *the* Son of God, but as *a* son of God, as one of *many* 'children' of God. Every sincere, fair-minded, God-seeking individual was a child of God, irrespective of his particular conception of the Supreme. In the life of Jesus, the most pure principles of life are reflected. Jesus should accordingly be seen as a paragon of virtue, in whose behaviour the eternal Christ shines through. Some modernists more or less identified Christ with the Holy Spirit, while others interpreted Christ to be the amorphous ideal of how man should be. In the perception of both, Jesus and Christ did not totally overlap.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>21</sup> E.g.: W. Muurling, *Resultaten van onderzoek en ervaring op godsdienstig gebied* II, 25; Ph.R. Hugenholtz, 'Het vierde evangelie naar zijne waarde voor onzen tijd', in: F.W.B. van Bell et al., *Voorlezingen over de Bijbelsche berichten aangaande het leven van Jezus, inzonderheid over het Johannes-evangelie* (Amsterdam 1866), 227-267, there 255-256.

<sup>22</sup> Members of the Dutch Radical School were former Walloon Reformed minister A. Pierson, Dutch Reformed theologians G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, J.A. Bruins, Sr., J. van Loon (1838-1908), W.C. van Manen and H.U. Meyboom, Lutheran theologian A.D. Loman, philosopher G.J.P.J. Bolland (1854-1922) and classicist S.A. Naber (1828-1913). See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 15-17; H. Detering, *Paulusbrieven ohne Paulus? Die Paulusbrieve in der holländischen Radikalkritik* (Frankfurt am Main 1992), 11-100; Verhoef, *W.C. van Manen*, 50-72.

<sup>23</sup> Reflection on the issue of the relationship between Jesus and Christ intensified in the early twentieth century, due to the rise of malcontentism and right-wing modernism. E.g.: [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] 'Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenbond', *De Hervorming* 1884-45 (8 November 1884), 179-180, there 179; A.W. van Wijk, *De beteekenis van den persoon van Jezus Christus. Vier voorlezingen* (Zwolle 1896); [P. Eldering in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Vergadering van mod. theologen', *De Hervorming* 1902-14 (5 April 1902), 107; G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga et al., *Christusbeschouwingen onder modernen* (Baarn [1909]); "'Christusbeschouwingen onder modernen'", *De Hervorming* 1910-06 (5 February 1910), 41-43; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Moderne Christologie', *Ibid.* 1910-19 (7 May 1910), 146-147; H. Oort, 'Miskening van Jezus', *Ibid.* 1912-01 (6 January 1912), 1-3; G.J. Heering, 'Misverstand', *Ibid.* 1913-11 (15 March 1913), 82-83; G.J. Heering, 'De Christus en de historische Jezus', *Ibid.* 1913-15 (12 April 1913), 116; H. Windisch, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Christumysterie of historische Jezus', *Ibid.* 1918-06 (9 February 1918), 21-22; 1918-07 (16 February 1918), 25; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Christus', *Ibid.* 1921-07 (19 February 1921), 48; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – De leuze "Los van het christendom", o.a. naar aanleiding van Wannée's "Religieuze levens- en wereldbeschouwing"', *Ibid.* 1921-46 (19 November 1921), 361-363, there 363; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Levensgeloof', *Ibid.* 1922-15 (15

Casting doubts on the divinity of Jesus was not unprecedented. Arianism in the fourth century and Anti-Trinitarianism, Socinianism and Unitarianism in the first centuries after the Reformation, to name the most well-known examples, had already done so.<sup>24</sup> The novelty of modern theology in this respect was that its adherents came to question the Evangelists' statements about Jesus by using a methodology styled after the natural sciences: the historical-critical method. Not all modernists held the same views regarding the a-historical Jesus, the ahistorical Christ and the relation between the two; indeed, one of the main tenets of modernism was that all individuals (should) have personal religious images and that none of these representations is similar to any other. The predominant modernist interpretation of the biblical Jesus as a paragon of virtue even came to be severely criticised by the aforementioned 'right-wing modernists', who condemned it as a typically nineteenth-century attempt to turn Jesus into the then-prevailing ideal of the virtuous, law-abiding civilian.<sup>25</sup> In other words, right-wing modernists chided first-generation modernists for doing the same thing of which the latter accused the Gospel writers: turning Jesus of Nazareth into the person *they* wanted him to be. Those first-generation modernists, and later-generation modernists who clung to the conceptions and characteristics that had dominated modernism during its formative phase, came to be known as '*oud-modernen*' (which can probably be translated best as 'old-school modernists'). Notwithstanding differences existing among them in this respect, all modernists cast doubts upon the orthodox explanation of the marvels Jesus is said to have done according to the Gospel. Because of their rejection of supernaturalism, their religious conceptual universe did not leave room for images and explanations that went beyond human comprehension.

However, human reason was not the only touchstone to determine whether a biblical image or a personal conception of God, Jesus and Christ should be regarded as sound or as unsubstantial. In religious life, there were two constituent factors: next to reason, *feeling* was just as important in acquiring a truly personal religious conviction. Reason and emotion were parameters that ideally had to complement each other in order to ensure that religion would not become too rationalistic or too sentimental. Scientific findings and scholarly theories thus should not dictate *what* someone had to believe, but rather *how* he could give proper expression to his religious sentiments.<sup>26</sup> If theology would take these findings and theories duly into account, it could and should serve as a cognitive, rational consideration of, and reflection on what people experienced in their inner life.<sup>27</sup> The fact that higher criticism had relegated the conception of Jesus as forgiver of sins to the realm of fantasy, did not take away the failings people experienced

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April 1922), 113-115; J.C.A. Fetter, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Geloof de moderne Christelijke gemeente in den historischen Jezus?', *Ibid.* 1923-22 (2 June 1923), 170-172; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Christusbeschouwing onder moderneren', *Ibid.* 1923-51 (22 December 1923), 402; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Christusbeschouwingen', *Ibid.* 1924-39 (27 September 1924), 306-307; 1924-40 (4 October 1924), 314-315; 1924-41 (11 October 1924), 323-324; J.J. Bleeker, 'De historiciteit van Jezus', *Ibid.* 1926-03 (16 January 1926), 18; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *De vrijzinnige Godsidee. Een boek over Godsvoorstellingen en over geloof* (Zeist 1928), 205-208; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme* (Huis ter Heide 1929), 18-31; D. Drijver, 'Binnenland – Wie zeggen de lieden dat ik ben?', *De Hervorming* 1932-04 (15 April 1932), 26-27; Van Driel, *Scheren in de schemering*, 143-148, 201-211.

<sup>24</sup> A detailed overview is given in: E.M. Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism. Socinianism and its Antecedents* (Cambridge [1945] 1977).

<sup>25</sup> H.S. Benjamins, *Een en ander. De traditie van de moderne theologie* (Kampen 2008), 147-153.

<sup>26</sup> Exemplary is: Ph.R. Hugenholtz, *Het kenmerkende der moderne richting* (Amsterdam 1878), 27-32.

<sup>27</sup> H.S. Benjamins, '*Innig godsdienstig en wetenschappelijk*'. *Vroomheid en rationaliteit in de vrijzinnige theologie* (Groningen 2013), 8-14.

in their lives. In the eyes of modernists, this ‘sense of guilt’ had nothing to do with innate depravity, but rather with the ethical, cognitive or moral infirmities of individuals who did not truly listen to their conscience or whose inner voice was not (yet) fully developed.<sup>28</sup> Here, reason and feeling converged into an explanation that did justice to both. On the same grounds, conversely, right-wing modernists distanced themselves from this monistic, optimistic explanation: after all, did not their religious feeling convince them of the distance between God and humans, and of the validity to stress God’s transcendence rather than His immanence?<sup>29</sup>

As regards the conceptual side of faith, the weight attached to feeling and personal experience left a lot of room for variety and variability. Reason was no constant either. With the progress of time, man came to understand more and more of the universe surrounding him and the forces and laws that structured natural and human life. On the basis of both feeling and reason, modernists rejected creedalism. The religious persuasion of an individual is hard to squeeze into precise terms, let alone the religious conviction of a group of people. Written confessions of faith should not be interpreted as nearly infallible doctrinal formulations, as was the case in almost all Christian churches, but rather as historical documents that give expression to the faith of a particular religious community at a particular moment in time. The custom that one could only become a member of a certain church when he endorsed the written confessions of faith that this particular church accepted as its doctrinal basis, was a severe curtailment of the freedom of conscience, modernists argued.<sup>30</sup> For, in their literal sense, creeds do not possess eternal value. If a person is a sincere seeker of Truth, his religious conceptions will inevitably be subject to change. Being religious should mean being actively immersed in an ongoing process of inner, spiritual growth. Therefore, modernists defined their religious singularity in terms of ‘principles’ rather than in terms of fixed concepts and tenets.<sup>31</sup> A modernist way of believing was in essence highly individualistic, since the conceptions an individual had of God were never totally the same as those of someone else. Nonetheless, as chapters 3 and 11 indicate, attempts have been made within both the Dutch and wider international modernist community to formulate a communal, creed-like declaration of faith. Yet the respective initiators of all of these attempts acknowledged that no formulation could ever encompass all those who

<sup>28</sup> E.g.: H.R. Warmolts, *Wat de moderne theologie leert over de zonde. Zesde brief aan dr. A.L. Poelman* (Groningen 1862); Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 135-143, 190.

<sup>29</sup> E.g.: Roessingh, *Rechts-modernisme*, 214-218; J.F. Beerens, *Het rechts-modernisme* (Utrecht 1920), 11; C.M. van Driel, *Schermen in de schemering. Vijf opstellen over modernisme en orthodoxie* (Hilversum 2007), 140-143.

<sup>30</sup> E.g.: A.F. Mackensteen, ‘De Constituanten’, *De Hervorming* (13 February 1873), 1-2, there 1; ‘De aanneming’, *Ibid.* 1873-12 (20 March 1873), 1-2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Wat wij willen’, *Ibid.* 1876-49 (7 December 1876), 1-2; M.E. van der Meulen, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-08 (24 February 1877), 4; Z., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Moet eene kerk eene belijdenis hebben?’, *Ibid.* 1877-42 (20 October 1877), 3-4; E.J.W. Koch, ‘Is het gewenscht dat nog langer het einde van het catechetisch onderwijs te samen valle met de aanneming tot lidmaat der gemeente?’, *Ibid.* 1878-15 (13 April 1878), 1-2; W.C. van Manen, ‘De synodale besluiten tegen de gewetensvrijheid’, *Onze Godsdienstpreek* II.22 (1878), 373-390; E.J.W. Koch, ‘Nog een woord over de aanneming tot lidmaat der gemeente als besluit van het voorafgaand catechetisch onderwijs’, *De Hervorming* 1880-14 (3 April 1880), 54-55; F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., ‘Binnenland – De kerkelijke kwestie’, *Ibid.* 1883-43 (27 October 1883), 169-170, there 170; E. Snellen, ‘Overvragen’, *Ibid.* 1886-04 (23 January 1886), 13-14, there 13; ‘Het “belijdenis-doen”’, *Ibid.* 1899-11 (18 March 1899), 41.

<sup>31</sup> E.g.: S. Hoekstra Bz., ‘Belang van het vrije kritische onderzoek voor het godsdienstig geloof van de gemeente’, in: Van Bell et al., *Voorlezingen over de Bijbelsche berichten*, 269-315; Matthes, *De nieuwe richting*, esp. 95-109; W.C. van Manen, *Het godsdienstig karakter der nieuwe richting, tegen de bedenkingen van dr. J. Cramer verdedigd* (’s-Hertogenbosch 1869), 21.

identified themselves as ‘modernists’ and should ever be seen as applicable to future generations of believers.

Another characteristic of modernism was the endeavour to harmonise Christianity with current trends in culture, science and society.<sup>32</sup> The boom of the natural sciences, industrial improvements and technical innovations gave man the opportunity to control nature more than ever before. Of course, ‘evolutionism’, Darwin’s theories about the origin of species and the descent of man, had a major impact on contemporary thinking,<sup>33</sup> but other ‘isms’ contributed just as much to the emergence of a ‘modern’ world view. Naturalism challenged the belief in the existence of a supernatural domain that was not subordinate to the laws of nature.<sup>34</sup> Empiricism stated that true knowledge could only be obtained through sensory perceptions.<sup>35</sup> Historism strengthened the idea that a critical examination of written sources from the past should enable mankind to reconstruct ‘*wie es eigentlich gewesen*’ (how bygone ages actually looked).<sup>36</sup> The ‘hand of God’ became more and more unnecessary to explain events formerly seen as unexplainable. The laws of nature could not be changed, but their effects were ‘makeable’. All these currents dramatically changed the way man looked towards the world surrounding him and his own position within it, causing conventional religion, so modernists believed, to become less and less plausible and acceptable. Modernists wanted to preserve Christianity as a powerful, influential and creative societal force in the age to come.<sup>37</sup> In order to actualise this, receptivity to present scholarly thought and scientific discoveries was called for. Churches and individual believers should take current developments into account and adjust their religious imagery to these ‘signs of the times’. It was modernists’ aspiration to detect those signs and to grasp which consequences those signs could or would have for society in general, and the position of religion within society in particular.

Modernists were convinced that their interpretation of the Christian sources of faith and the Christian tradition did more justice to God’s intentions with life on earth than the interpretation of others. In their eyes, clinging to the verbatim words of Scripture or trying to harmonise evident biblical inconsistencies with each other was a misunderstanding of the true meaning of the Bible. In the articles, books and sermons they wrote to popularise their ideas, modernists repeatedly accentuated this.<sup>38</sup> They were blamed in orthodox circles for lacking piety. Yet, as

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<sup>32</sup> Van der Wall accordingly states that “the modernist programme could be summarized in one word: adaptation.” Quoted from: E.G.E. van der Wall, *The Enemy Within: Religion, Science, and Modernism* (Wassenaar 2007), 7.

<sup>33</sup> For a detailed account of the reception of Darwin’s ideas in Dutch theology, see: B. Leeuwenburgh, *Darwin in domineesland* (Nijmegen 2009).

<sup>34</sup> On naturalism and supernaturalism in general, see: R.H. Nash, *Faith and Reason. Searching for a Rational Faith* (Grand Rapids 1988), 253-255; W.B. Drees, *Religion, Science and Naturalism* (Cambridge 1996); G. Keil, ‘Naturalism’, in: D. Moran, *The Routledge Companion to Twentieth Century Philosophy* (London and New York 2008), 255-307.

<sup>35</sup> On empiricism in general, see: A. Boyce Gibson, *Theism and Empiricism* (London 1970); J.D. Law, *The Rhetoric of Empiricism. Language and Perception from Locke to I.A. Richards* (Ithaca and London 1993).

<sup>36</sup> On the relationship between historism and modern theology, see: H.J. Paul, *Het moeras van de geschiedenis. Nederlandse debatten over historisme* (Amsterdam 2012), 101-104.

<sup>37</sup> F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. eloquently phrased this as follows: “For religion to remain the inspiring principle in everyday life, it should develop in accordance with the times and wear the garment of its time. If not, then the children of their time might still respect it, but put it away in the cabinet as an antiquity, which they had outgrown, nonetheless.” (“*Zal de godsdienst het bezielend beginsel van de praktijk blijven, dan moet hij meê groeien met den tijd en het kleed dragen van zijn tijd. Doet hij dat niet, dan wordt hij door de kinderen des tijds misschien nog geëerbiedigd, maar toch in de kast gezet als een antiquiteit, waaraan zij zich echter ontwassen voelen.*”) Quoted from: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., *Geloofstrijd. Eene schets uit het kerkelijk leven onzer dagen* (Amsterdam 1879), 35.

<sup>38</sup> Examples are mentioned in chapter 3.

demonstrated in chapter 6, piety was in fact a central notion to their philosophy of life; they simply had a different understanding of what ‘piety’ meant than orthodox Protestants. The image of God as Father was an especially dominant theme in their devotional literature.<sup>39</sup>

Children were by no means overlooked. Although it was questioned to what extent and in what way they should be informed about the current state of affairs in biblical studies,<sup>40</sup> children should not be fooled by reading the Old and New Testaments to them as historically accurate reports. It was better to familiarise them with the symbolic character of Scripture from an early age onwards. Otherwise, modernists feared, they would lose their faith during adolescence, when they would be intellectually able to ascertain that the biblical marvels and imagery do not correspond with reality and that these, consequently, could never have taken place.<sup>41</sup> In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, several modernist children’s Bibles were issued in which youngsters were imbued with love of nature and encouraged to develop personal conceptions of God. Biblical narratives, of which many, particularly in the Old Testament,

<sup>39</sup> E.g.: ‘Wat is in naam der wetenschap aan de Christelijke gemeente afgeëischt?’, *De Hervorming* 1876-35 (31 August 1876), 1-3, there 3; [W. Scheffer in:] ‘Dr. W. Scheffer over het materialisme’, *Ibid.* 1882-01 (7 January 1882), 2; [A.W. van Wijk in:] ‘De beteekenis der moderne richting voor onzen tijd’, *Ibid.* 1882-17 (29 April 1882), 2; J.D.C. Koch, “‘In hoeverre geeft de persoonlijkheid van Jezus steun aan ’t geloofsleven der Christenen?’”, *Ibid.* 1882-42 (21 October 1882), 165-166, there 166; D. André de la Porte, ‘Hebben de modernen, voor de godsdienstige vorming hunner kinderen, hulp te zoeken bij de voorstellingen der orthodoxie?’, *Ibid.* 1888-18 (5 May 1888), 69-70, there 70; J. Herderscheê, ‘Onze leestafel – “Eene aesthetische bloemlezing”’, *Ibid.* 1893-38 (23 September 1893), 151; J.W.B., ‘Jezus’ ideaal’, *Ibid.* 1893-49 (9 December 1893), 193; D.C. de Haas, ‘De opwekking van Christus in verband met de oude wereldbeschouwing’, *Ibid.* 1902-33 (16 August 1902), 258-259, there 259; L. Knappert, ‘Roeping’, *Ibid.* 1903-24 (13 June 1903), 186-187; W. Zaalberg, ‘Het Evangelie’, *Ibid.* 1903-28 (11 July 1903), 217-218, there 217. See also: L.N. de Jong, *Vrije vroomheid. Aard, grondslag en praktijk van het vrijzinnig-godsdienstig leven* (Baarn 1911); Benjamins, “*Innig godsdienstig en wetenschappelijk*”, 8-14.

<sup>40</sup> This issue was repeatedly brought up for discussion during meetings of modernist teachers of religion. E.g.: J.H. Maronier, ‘Binnenland – Vergadering van dames aan zondagscholen van vrijzinnige richting werkzaam’, *De Hervorming* 1884-22 (31 May 1884), 88-89; 1884-23 (7 June 1884), 91-92; J.H. Maronier, ‘Binnenland – Vierde algemeene vergadering van dames die aan zondagsscholen in vrijzinnigen geest werkzaam zijn’, *Ibid.* 1886-25 (19 June 1886), 98-99; D. André de la Porte, ‘Binnenland – Zesde algemeene vergadering van dames, die aan zondagsscholen in vrijzinnigen geest werkzaam zijn’, *Ibid.* 1890-27 (5 July 1890), 107; ‘Tiende algemeene vergadering van personen, die aan zondagscholen in vrijzinnigen geest werkzaam zijn, op woensdag 17 Juni 1896 te Leiden gehouden in de kerk der Waalsche gemeente’, *Ibid.* 1896-30 (25 July 1896), 117-118; ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Zondagsscholen’, *Ibid.* 1900-17 (28 April 1900), 129; T.A. van Eck, ‘Onze zondagschool-vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1904-29 (16 July 1904), 228-229, there 228; S., ‘Verslag van den cursus voor zondagschoolonderwijzeressen en -onderwijzers’, *Ibid.* 1909-32 (7 August 1909), 251; 1909-33 (14 August 1909), 258-259; J.A. Wolters, ‘Het werk der zondagschool’, *Ibid.* 1911-21 (27 May 1911), 162-164; G., ‘De 18<sup>e</sup> algemeene vergadering van vrijzinnige zondagscholen in Nederland’, *Ibid.* 1912-30 (27 July 1912), 234-235; ‘Berichten en mededeelingen – Nederlandsche Vereniging van Vrijzinnige Zondagsscholen’, *Ibid.* 1916-28 (8 July 1916), 235-236.

<sup>41</sup> E.g.: ‘Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsch Protestantenvbond’, *Ibid.* 1876-17 (27 April 1876), 3; Z., ‘Onze leestafel – “Kinderbijbel”’, *Ibid.* 1879-09 (1 March 1879), 36; ‘Godsdienstige opvoeding’, *Ibid.* 1880-32 (7 August 1880), 126; J.H. Maronier, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Tweede algemeene vergadering van dames, verbonden aan zondagscholen van vrijzinnige richting’, *Ibid.* 1882-23 (10 June 1882), 90; J.H. Maronier, ‘Binnenland – Vergadering van dames aan zondagscholen van vrijzinnige richting werkzaam’, *Ibid.* 1884-23 (7 June 1884), 91-92, there 91; J.J. van Hille, ‘De 15<sup>e</sup> Nederlandsche Protestantendag’, *Ibid.* 1887-46 (12 November 1887), 181-182, there 181; E. Snellen, ‘De Bijbelsche wonder verhalen en het gemoedsleven onzer kinderen’, *Ibid.* 1888-01 (1 January 1888), 1-2, there 2 [erroneously dated ‘1 January 1887’]; D. André de la Porte, ‘Hebben de modernen, voor de godsdienstige vorming hunner kinderen, hulp te zoeken bij de voorstellingen der orthodoxie?’, *Ibid.* 1888-17 (28 April 1888), 65-66, there 65; 1888-18 (5 May 1888), 69-70, there 69; [W.E. Salverda de Grave in:] ‘Binnenland – De Protestantendag’, *Ibid.* 1896-45 (7 November 1896), 178-179, there 179; [J.F.D. Mossel in:] ‘Binnenland – Een protest’, *Ibid.* 1897-08 (20 February 1897), 31; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Wel overwogen?’, *Ibid.* 1897-11 (13 March 1897), 42; C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Waarheid in de opvoeding’, *Ibid.* 1902-03 (18 January 1902), 19-20, there 19; ‘Een nieuwe Kinderbijbel’, *Ibid.* 1902-25 (21 June 1902), 193-194; N. van Kol, ‘Berichten, enz. – De Bijbel voor kinderen’, *Ibid.* 1902-30 (26 July 1902), 236-237, there 237.

were deemed inappropriate for children,<sup>42</sup> were presented as figments of imagination.<sup>43</sup> Modernists' primary goal was to imbue children with the fundamental ethical attitude that is best expressed by the Great Commandment in Mark 12 to love God and to love one's neighbours as oneself. In the wake of children's Bibles, a considerable amount of modernist brochures, novels, magazine articles and catechetical compendia were published,<sup>44</sup> which wanted to instil children with a sense of morality and common decency and strengthen their ability to discern between good and evil as well.<sup>45</sup> The authors of modernist youth literature and religious instructors constantly stressed that it was not their endeavour to breed 'little modernists'. Instead, they claimed, their only aim was to help children to acquire a religious faith of their own.<sup>46</sup> The Bible was not the only book that could arouse religious feelings; other, contemporary literature could also be helpful in this respect.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, next to the historical development of Christianity, children should be instructed in the fundamentals and evolution of other religions too.<sup>48</sup>

This relative receptiveness to religions other than Christianity was rooted in a latent hope for a universal religion of mankind. In other words, among modernists, the hope was cherished that all human beings would eventually be spiritually united. Such a universal religion, it was believed, could only originate from liberal Christianity. After all, it could only come into being if religious life was able to develop in all freedom – that is, without being restrained by doctrines, creeds and beliefs that conflicted with human reason and that did not stem from personal emotions.

<sup>42</sup> E.g.: C., 'Godsdienstonderwijs – Eene bedroevende merkwaardigheid', *Ibid.* 1878-37 (14 September 1878), 3; J.H. Maronier, 'Binnenland – Tweede samenkost van dames', *Ibid.* 1880-48 (27 November 1880), 190; J.H. Maronier, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Commissie voor de zondagsscholen', *Ibid.* 1886-16 (17 April 1886), 63; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Wel overwogen?', *Ibid.* 1897-11 (13 March 1897), 42; L. Knappert, *Ons godsdienstonderwijs in verband met de opvoeding onzer kinderen* (Assen 1905), 23.

<sup>43</sup> Exemplary in this respect is the *Bijbel voor jongelieden*, a children's Bible written by the brothers-in-law H. Oort and I. Hooykaas and published between 1871 and 1878. See also: Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 70; W.J. van der Meiden, "Zoo heerlijk eenvoudig." *Geschiedenis van de kinderbijbel in Nederland* (Hilversum 2009), 125-130.

<sup>44</sup> For an account of Dutch liberal Protestant children's literature, particularly in the twentieth century, see: R. van Schoonderwoerd den Bezemer, *Vroom en Vrij. De geschiedenis van de vrijzinnig protestantse jeugdliteratuur in Nederland* (The Hague 2001).

<sup>45</sup> E.g.: 'Godsdienstige opvoeding', *De Hervorming* 1880-37 (11 September 1880), 146; 'Het geheim van de rechte verhouding tusschen ouders en kind', *Ibid.* 1882-03 (21 January 1882), 9; W. Zaalberg, 'Godsdienstige verdraagszaamheid', *Ibid.* 1889-24 (15 June 1889), 94; D. André de la Porte, 'Binnenland – Zesde algemeene vergadering van dames, die aan zondagscholen in vrijzinnigen geest werkzaam zijn', *Ibid.* 1890-27 (5 July 1890), 107; C.S.M. Kuenen, 'Zeventiende algemeene vergadering van onderwijzeressen en onderwijzers aan zondagsscholen in vrijzinnigen geest', *Ibid.* 1910-29 (16 July 1910), 227-228, there 227.

<sup>46</sup> E.g.: 'Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsche Protestantenvond', *Ibid.* 1876-01 (6 January 1876), 3; 'Mededeelingen van het Nederlandsch Protestantenvond', *Ibid.* 1877-44 (3 November 1877), 3; 'Godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1880-33 (14 August 1880), 129-130, there 130; Een onderwijzeres der zondagschool, 'Aan den heer Jb. van Gilse', *Ibid.* 1882-09 (4 March 1882), 34; J.H. Maronier, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Tweede algemeene vergadering van dames, verbonden aan zondagscholen van vrijzinnige richting', *Ibid.* 1882-23 (10 June 1882), 90; J.H. Maronier, 'Binnenland – Vierde algemeene vergadering van dames die aan zondagsscholen in vrijzinnigen geest werkzaam zijn', *Ibid.* 1886-25 (19 June 1886), 98-99, there 99; J. Herderschee, 'God en de kinderen', *Ibid.* 1888-08 (25 February 1888), 29-30, there 30; 'Een nieuwe Kinderbijbel', *Ibid.* 1902-25 (21 June 1902), 193-194, there 193; S.D.A. Wartena, 'Ingezonden – Het doel der zondagschool', *Ibid.* 1917-28 (14 July 1917), 230.

<sup>47</sup> Such as Hans Christian Andersen's (1805-1875) fairytales. See: *Leerstof voor de zondagschool, uitgegeven door den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond* (Amsterdam 1880), passim.

<sup>48</sup> E.g.: in his *Schetsen en tafereelen. Godsdienstig leesboek voor school en huis*, published in 1872, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. did not only discuss the history of Christianity, but also the development of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam. See also: Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 72.

Modernists were firmly convinced that their religious principles, the ‘true’ principles of Jesus, satisfied both the heart and the mind. When more and more people shared in the fruits of progress, their principles would therefore ultimately be acceptable to all. The latent hope for a universal religion found expression in a strong interest in comparative religious studies, to which, in the Dutch context, particularly the name of C.P. Tiele was connected.<sup>49</sup>

### 3. The Roots and Dual Character of Modernism

It is important to stress that modernism was not meant to be a radical and profound break with historical Christianity. Rather, modernists intended to purge contemporary Christianity of elements that they considered to be deviations from the attitude to life ‘as Jesus had meant it to be’. Modernising Christianity, they believed, hence all came down to going back to the ‘pure’ spirit of Jesus and reforming church and society on the basis of that spirit. Modernists were by no means unique in their pretension to give expression to Christianity ‘as it was meant to be’. The sixteenth-century Reformers, for instance, also claimed to restore Christianity to its original, pure form.<sup>50</sup> Neo-Calvinism, to name another example, intended to bring Reformed orthodoxy ‘in rapport’ with the present by returning to, and consequently applying, the true principles of Calvinism and as such of pure Christianity<sup>51</sup> – neo-Calvinist statesman D.P.D. Fabius (1851-1931) accordingly argued in all sincerity that Adam had not only been the first human, but also the first neo-Calvinist.<sup>52</sup>

Modernists did not trace their roots all the way back to Adam – first and foremost because they rejected the historicity of Genesis –, but some of them acted in a similar manner to Fabius by claiming to recognise their own attitude to life in several of the most important persons in the history of mankind. P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. (1834-1911), to take the most extreme example, believed that, among others, Buddha, Socrates, the prophet Isaiah, John the Baptist, Jesus, the apostle Paul, Francis of Assisi (1181/1182-1226), Martin Luther (1483-1546), William of Orange (1533-1584) and philosopher Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) had actually all been ‘modernists’.<sup>53</sup> Soon after Hugenholtz made this statement in 1898, incorporating historical figures in retrospective into their own ranks became less accepted among modernists. In the twentieth century, when, as chapter 3 shows, they began to re-emphasise the Christian instead of the merely religious character of their attitude to life, modernists nonetheless continued to cry out to orthodoxy that their beliefs were no historical ‘anomaly’. They stressed that modernism was rooted in a broad, centuries-old ‘*vrijzinnige*’ (‘liberal’ or ‘heterodox’) tradition in Christianity that was as old or even slightly older than Protestantism. This was what H.T. de Graaf (1875-1930), at the time one of the leading modernist opinion makers, implied when he remarked in 1915 that the then-commonly acknowledged synonymy of the words ‘modernist’ and ‘*vrijzinnig*’ was of a temporary kind.<sup>54</sup> In other words, De Graaf considered modernism to be one – hitherto

<sup>49</sup> A.L. Molendijk, *The Emergence of the Science of Religion in the Netherlands* (Leiden and Boston 2005), 70-79.

<sup>50</sup> E.g.: L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, *Geschiedenis van het protestantisme I. Van de Hervorming tot aan den Munsterschen Vrede* (Haarlem 1865), 17.

<sup>51</sup> M.E. Brinkman and C.E. van der Kooi, *Het calvinisme van Kuyper en Bavinck* (Zoetermeer 1997), 10.

<sup>52</sup> Fabius made this statement in the *Geldersche Kerkbode* in 1926. Referred to in: ‘Kerknieuws – De Geref. Kerken’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCIX.32246 (7 December 1926), evening paper, 10; C.G. van der Staaij, ‘D.P.D. Fabius (II)’, *Zicht* XVIII.6 (December 1992), 219-229, there 219.

<sup>53</sup> [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr.], ‘Ons Allerheiligen’, *De Hervorming* 1898-45 (5 November 1898), 179-180.

<sup>54</sup> H.T. de Graaf, ‘Leestafel – “Orthodox of modern”’, *Ibid.* 1915-48 (27 November 1915), 435.



the last one – of several phases in the development of *vrijzinnig* Protestantism. J. Lindeboom elaborates upon this conviction in his threefold *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*. The third volume is entirely devoted to modernism. The second volume ends in 1870, when “liberal Protestantism had developed into and was defined by modernism” and begins with the life of German man of letters G.E. Lessing (1729-1781), who divulged and defended the theological ideas of the aforementioned Reimarus.<sup>55</sup> The first volume is devoted to what Lindeboom, following German theologian E. Troeltsch (1865-1923), calls ‘neo-Protestantism’. This ‘formative phase’ of *vrijzinnig*, liberal Protestantism was shaped by men who accentuated the individual character of faith at the expense of the role of the church as institution of salvation, wanted church and state to be separated, and stressed that the Bible was not the exclusive source of Revelation. As such, these men had distinguished themselves from mainstream or ‘old’ Protestantism, which the sixteenth-century Reformers had brought into being and which Lindeboom considered to be in line with medieval Christianity. In contrast, ‘neo-Protestantism’ was rooted in the biblical humanism of the Renaissance. It had been further shaped by anti-Trinitarian thinkers such as Michael Servetus (1511-1553) and Faustus Socinus (1539-1604) in the sixteenth century, and Enlightenment theology in the eighteenth century.<sup>56</sup>

There is reason to question whether such a quest for a ‘liberal’ current in the history of Christianity is not rather anachronistic – which Lindeboom candidly acknowledged.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, tracing modernism all the way back to the Renaissance would be too much in a section that is merely providing a brief analysis of the roots of modernism. Here, it is sufficient to indicate the influences that helped to bring modernism into being from the late eighteenth century onwards – the period with which the second volume of Lindeboom’s *Geschiedenis* begins. It is legitimate not to go any further back in time, because, as K.H. Roessingh argued, the theology of modernism attempted to harmonise Christianity with the scientific-scholarly culture that developed as of the late eighteenth century.<sup>58</sup>

This culture was the result of a process known as the ‘Enlightenment’ or ‘*Aufklärung*’. While it is difficult if not impossible to give a straightforward definition, at least one thing is indisputable: at the basis of the Enlightenment was the conviction that human reason should be the measure of everything.<sup>59</sup> The eighteenth century, in which the Enlightenment reached its peak, is therefore called the ‘Age of Reason’. The fact that a theory or practice had been handed down through the ages was no valid criterion to accept it if it ran counter to what could be cognitively determined. Regarding the Christian faith, this meant that the Bible and the church were not authoritative because they claimed to have a divine origin – they only had authority insofar as they had a basis in reason. In fact, the concept of ‘faith’ as such implied that one’s intellectual faculties were not yet fully developed: accepting the existence of God

<sup>55</sup> “*Dan toch heeft het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme zich tot Modernisme [...] ontwikkeld en wordt hierdoor in hoofdzaak bepaald.*” Quoted from: J. Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II. *Tot 1870* (Assen 1933), 5.

<sup>56</sup> J. Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* I. *Tot Lessing: het ontstaan van het neo-protestantisme* (Huis ter Heide 1929), 9. See also: Molendijk, ‘Vrijzinnigheid ruim opgevat’, 20-22.

<sup>57</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* I, 11-12.

<sup>58</sup> Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 3-4. Benjamins follows Roessingh in that; see: Benjamins, *Een en ander*, 15.

<sup>59</sup> An overview of the different definitions of ‘Enlightenment’ since the late eighteenth century is given in: J. Schmidt, ‘Introduction: What is Enlightenment? A Question, Its Context and Some Consequences’, in: J. Schmidt (ed.), *What is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions* (Berkeley etc. 1996), 1-44.

should not be a matter of belief, but of knowledge – it could be cognitively experienced that He existed. Nature was structured in accordance with regularities and laws, evincing that there was rational intelligence (a Creator-God) behind it. Many Enlightenment philosophers were deists: they contended that God only reveals Himself in nature, rejecting the concept of ‘supernaturalism’ and the idea that God also reveals Himself in a way (through Christ) that defies rationality. Some of them accepted the Bible as a book containing reasonable ethical lessons, but not as being (a source of) revelation itself.<sup>60</sup> In Protestant theology an attempt was made to take reason as point of departure, just as in deism, while retaining the notion of a supernatural revelation, contrary to deism. The ‘rationalistic supernaturalism’ or, as it was also called in the Dutch context, the ‘*oud-liberalisme*’ (‘old liberalism’) that was the result thereof, and that thrived around 1800, was no solid theological system, but rather an incoherent blend of intellectualism and the concepts of Christian orthodoxy. Its champions did not give up the premise that God reveals Himself in nature *and* in Jesus Christ. The latter’s exceptional virtuousness and honesty made it reasonable for them to see him as a supernatural being.<sup>61</sup> The underlying idea of their theology was that reason and revelation cannot conflict with each other: if there is a ‘basic truth’ in the Bible, the source of revelation, that seems to go against reason, then reason has apparently not yet developed far enough. In rationalistic supernaturalism, revelation therefore basically had the function of filling gaps in human knowledge. Church historian F.R.J. Knetsch gives an apt description of the line of reasoning behind rationalistic supernaturalism. Its champions, trying to make sense of the traditional Christian belief that man needs to be redeemed with God through Christ,

argued that it was impossible for reason to become aware of [this need for] redemption and subsequently thanked God for giving us notice thereof through His revelation. This notice is beyond what is implied in the nature of things and what can be derived from nature through reasoning – it was thus super-natural, yet by no means irrational. On the contrary, by accepting revelation, it was possible to satisfyingly continue reasoning.<sup>62</sup>

Although modern theologians would denounce many of the premises of rationalistic supernaturalism, they held on to the principle that the content of faith, and the concepts and forms in which faith finds expression, ought to be reasonable.

In the Dutch context, modern theology could be seen as a more radical attempt at theological reform than the attempt the originators of the so-called *Groninger godgeleerdheid* (Groningen theology, named after the Dutch university town where these theologians lectured), had made in the 1820s and 1830s. On the one hand, modern theology was a critique of Groningen theology. On the other hand, Groningen theologians and their sympathisers in the Dutch Reformed Church, referred to as the Groningen movement, had an unorthodox view on

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<sup>60</sup> On deism, see: E. Feil, ‘Deism’, in: M. Delon (ed.), *Encyclopedia of the Enlightenment* I (London and New York [2001] 2013), 361-364.

<sup>61</sup> Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 18-19.

<sup>62</sup> “[Men] [...] stelde dat de rede van de verlossing uit zichzelf geen weet kon hebben, en dankte vervolgens God die door Zijn openbaring deze aan ons had bekend gemaakt. Die bekendmaking ging uit boven wat normaal in de natuur der dingen gelegen en daaruit door de rede viel af te leiden, was dus supra-natureel, maar absoluut niet irrationeel. Integendeel, eenmaal de openbaring aanvaard, kon de rede weer vrolijk verder.” Quoted from: F.R.J. Knetsch, ‘Petrus Hofstede de Groot (1802-1886). Vriendelijk volksvoorlichter of ideoloog van het imperialisme?’, in: G.A. van Gemert et al. (eds.), “*Om niet aan onwetendheid en barbarij te bezwijken*”. *Groningse geleerden, 1614-1989* (Hilversum 1989), 129-146, there 129-131.

Christ and salvation, differed with orthodoxy in matters of doctrine, and were preoccupied with the idea of moral uplifting. As such, they helped to pave the way for modern theology and the modernist movement.<sup>63</sup> Just as the advocates of rationalist supernaturalism, Groningen theologians as L.G. Pareau (1800-1866) and P. Hofstede de Groot (1802-1886) believed in the existence of a supernatural realm next to nature; to know God, not only nature but also the Bible had to be acknowledged as a source of divine revelation. However, Groningen theologians did not accept reason as the ultimate basis to found faith on. They believed that man's inner life was at the basis of faith. In retrospect, they found a legitimation of this view in the philosophy of F.D.E. Schleiermacher (1768-1834), who taught that intuition and feelings collectively formed a separate, independent faculty of human consciousness in which individuals experience reality directly, as opposed to the indirect awareness of reality through reasoning.<sup>64</sup> Instead of stating that faith stems from a feeling of absolute dependence on an infinite power (God), as Schleiermacher did, Groningen theologians rather described faith as the expression of a feeling of love for God.<sup>65</sup> In turn, God showed His love for mankind in Jesus Christ, the person in whom He revealed Himself and through whom He wanted to lead individuals to true humanity. Jesus, Groningen theologians stated, was God in human shape. He carried the image of the perfect human. The purpose of history was to make individuals identical in shape to him. Jesus was the Redeemer, because his faultlessness reminded people of their own ethical imperfection and his life gave them an example to follow in order to combat this imperfection. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus, knowledge of which is given in the Gospel, had not 'reconciled' humans with God, but had rather been necessary to found the institution of the church. Just as Jesus had 'educated' – Groningen theologians used this term (*'opvoeden'*) themselves – his apostles, the church that these apostles had brought into development had as its *raison d'être* to shape humans after his image. Accordingly, church life was not about accepting doctrines, but about listening to and internalising Jesus's teachings – expressed in the motto *'niet de leer, maar de Heer'*.<sup>66</sup>

Under the name of *'evangelischen'*, with which they referred to their Gospel-centred piety, the spiritual descendants of Groningen theology and the Groningen movement continued to be present at theological faculties and in church life after the rise of modernism, albeit in rapidly diminishing numbers. The reason for this loss of influence and numerical marginalisation is three-fold. First, when Groningen theology and the Groningen movement emerged, no views were as progressive and as liberal as those its champions put forward. As of the 1840s, however, ideas that came to be labelled as 'modernist' pretended to be way more progressive and more liberal. Modernists went much further in their intentions to reform Christianity, church life and social life, with which they assured themselves of the sympathy of parts of the progress-minded bourgeoisie that had previously supported the *evangelischen*.<sup>67</sup> Second, when modernists

<sup>63</sup> E.H. Cossee, "'De geheele godsdienst behoort tot het gevoel". Romantische elementen in kerk en theologie', *De Negentiende Eeuw* VIII.2 (1984), 91-107, there 101, 104; Cossee, *Willem Muurling*, 24.

<sup>64</sup> R.M. Adams, 'Faith and Religious Knowledge', in: J. Mariña (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Cambridge etc. 2005), 35-51.

<sup>65</sup> E.H. Cossee, *Verwantschap en verwijdering. De Groninger godgeleerden en het unitarisme* (Groningen 1992), 4-5.

<sup>66</sup> J. Huizinga, *Verspreide opstellen over de geschiedenis van Nederland* (Amsterdam [1982] 2007), 243-244; J. Vree, *De Groninger godgeleerden. De oorsprongen en de eerste periode van hun optreden* (Kampen 1984), 330-342; Klooster, *Groninger Godgeleerdheid in Friesland*, 15-31.

<sup>67</sup> The bourgeois basis of the Groningen movement is mentioned in, e.g.: L.G.J. Verberne, *Geschiedenis van Nederland* VIII. *Nieuwste geschiedenis* (Amsterdam 1938), 90.

entered the ecclesial scene, the *evangelischen* became wedged between modernism on the one side and moderate orthodoxy on the other.<sup>68</sup> They had difficulty keeping their ground in the intensified polarised climate in the Dutch Reformed Church to which the rise of modernism led. Third, Groningen theologians believed in the historical accuracy of the New Testament, but failed to make clear how this belief was rooted in inner life. Apparently, individuals should accept the New Testament as historically accurate because it had a *given* authority, an authority that was non-negotiable. This was a weak spot in Groningen theology, which therefore turned out to be inadequate in the long run.<sup>69</sup> Several Groningen theologians even joined the modernist ranks. Among them was professor W. Muurling (1805-1882), who felt that modernism was merely the ultimate, inevitable consequence of Groningen theology.<sup>70</sup> Other *evangelischen*, such as Hofstede de Groot, explicitly denied that they had paved the way for modernism; for them, modernists' anti-supernaturalist interpretation of the Gospel, particularly modernists' denial of New Testament miracles as historical facts, was an attack on the essence of Christianity itself.<sup>71</sup>

The decisive factor that brought modernism into being as a current within academic theology was the emergence of the *Tübingen Schule*, named after the German university town where the founder of this school, F. Chr. Baur (1792-1860), conducted his scholarly research. Methodologically, Baur integrally and systematically studied the New Testament in a historical-critical way. In his exegesis of New Testament texts, he thus tried to find out how and in which historical contexts these texts came into being while rejecting any supernatural interpretation of them, and building his explanation upon reasonable, verifiable arguments. Baur combined his historical-critical methodology with insights borrowed from German philosopher G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), whose philosophy is labelled 'Idealism'. Simply put, Hegel argued that reality has a *spiritual* nature: world history should be seen as the ongoing development of what he called '*Weltgeist*'. Hegel described a dialectical pattern in world history, which is usually summed up in terms coined by German philosopher I. Kant (1724-1804) and popularised by Kant's student J.G. Fichte (1762-1814): thesis, antithesis, synthesis. Every event in world history is the result of ideas lying behind it. Those ideas can be challenged by other ideas, resulting in another event. This event is the *antithesis* of the event to which it is a reaction, the *thesis*. Out of this dialectic between thesis and antithesis, a higher unity can emerge that harmonises the two: the *synthesis*. In due course, when it begins to get challenged, this synthesis can itself become a thesis, after which the whole process starts all over again.<sup>72</sup> Baur interpreted the emergence of Christianity in such a dialectical way. In his view, an ideological struggle had been waging among the earliest followers of Jesus. Against the idea of those, led by the apostle Peter, who claimed that followers of Jesus should strictly obey the Jewish laws, others, led by the apostle Paul, championed the idea that belief in Jesus no longer required a strict obedience of those laws. To put this in dialectical terms: Petrine Christianity was the thesis and Pauline Christianity the antithesis. By looking at formative Christianity as such,

<sup>68</sup> Klooster, *Groninger Godgeleerdheid in Friesland*, 292.

<sup>69</sup> Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 40-43; Benjamins, *Een en ander*, 53-57.

<sup>70</sup> Cossee, *Willem Muurling*, 15; Van Berkel, *Universiteit van het Noorden* I, 602-605.

<sup>71</sup> E.g.: P. Hofstede de Groot, *De moderne theologie in Nederland. Volgens de hoofdwerken harer beroemdste voorstanders* (Groningen 1870), esp. 54-55. See also: Klooster, *Groninger Godgeleerdheid in Friesland*, 239.

<sup>72</sup> M. Forster, 'Hegel's Dialectical Method', in: F.C. Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge etc. 1993), 130-170.

Baur was able to make sense of inconsistencies and contradictions found within different New Testament fragments. According to him, a synthesis was reached in post-apostolic, second-century Catholic Christianity: the *principles*, not necessarily the specific regulations, of the Jewish laws still applied, but without genuine faith in Christ these principles were meaningless.<sup>73</sup> Baur's historical-critical, Idealistic studies had a tremendous impact on academic theology. One of his students, D.F. Strauss (1808-1874), based his *Das Leben Jesu (The Life of Jesus)*, published in 1835, on historical-critical methodology and the dialectics of Hegelian Idealism. For Strauss, a supernatural interpretation of the Gospel was the thesis. A purely rationalist interpretation was the antithesis. According to Strauss, however, both interpretations focused on the historicity of the stories about Jesus and hence failed to recognise that these stories were *myths*, presented as dealing with historical facts, but actually being symbolic modes of expression for religious-ethical ideals. Interpreting the Gospel stories about Jesus in such a mythical way was the synthesis. This, Strauss stressed, did not mean that these stories were 'false': the verbatim text might not refer to actual events, but the ideals expressed in it remained eternal truths.<sup>74</sup>

There is much more to say about the Tübingen School, the theological views it has brought forth, and its relation to German philosophy, but here it is sufficient to note that the views of theologians as Baur and Strauss were at the basis of what came to be known as 'modern theology'.<sup>75</sup> As said in the introductory chapter, a distinction should be made between modern theology and the modernist movement: they were closely related, but their origin was not entirely the same. This was, at least, what modernists themselves repeatedly accentuated. Modern theology emerged within an academic context, out of the endeavour to let theology keep pace with contemporary methods and insights developed in science and the humanities. The modernist movement, on the other hand, came into being due to "all kinds of historico-cultural circumstances – social, political, ecclesial, literary."<sup>76</sup> Roessingh, who is quoted here, did not specify these circumstances, but he undoubtedly referred to the processes headed under the label 'modernisation' in the introductory chapter, as well as to the dissatisfaction with the way in which church life responded to these processes among the faithful. The distinction between modern theology and the modernist movement was made particularly to refute the orthodox claim that modern theology was merely 'artificially' transplanted from academia to the church and hence did not 'organically' emerge within the bosom of the church itself. Modernists as H.C. Lohr (1836-1922) and I. Hooykaas (1837-1894) implied that while modern theology tried to do justice to 'the demands of reason', the modernist *movement* was the result of a cry from the heart of those who felt that in religious life only the individual conscience should matter.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Law, *The Historical-Critical Method*, 62. Other authors state that Pauline Christianity was the thesis and Petrine Christianity the antithesis. E.g.: G.E. Ladd (D.A. Hagner ed.), *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids [1974] 1993), 3. For more on Baur, see: G. Fraedrich, *Ferdinand Christian Baur. Der Begründer der Tübinger Schule als Theologe, Schriftsteller und Charakter* (Gotha 1909); J. Zachhuber, *Zwischen Idealismus und Historismus. Theologie als Wissenschaft in der Tübinger Schule und in der Ritschlschule* (Leipzig 2015).

<sup>74</sup> W.C. Placher, *A History of Christian Theology. An Introduction* (Louisville 1983), 277. An overview of the influence Strauss exerted on Dutch theology is given in: H.W. Obbink, *David Friedrich Strauss, in Nederlandse reacties op zijn theologie in de negentiende eeuw* (Utrecht [1973]).

<sup>75</sup> Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 17-19. For more on the Tübingen School, see: H. Harris, *The Tübingen School* (Oxford 1975).

<sup>76</sup> "...een reeks van cultuurhistorische factoren, – maatschappelijke, politieke, kerkelijke, letterkundige –..." Quoted from: Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 2.

<sup>77</sup> Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 77-78.

#### 4. Modernism before the Founding of *De Hervorming*

J. Herderscheê, identified in the introductory chapter as the first chronicler of Dutch modernism, considers 1840 to be the year that marked the beginning of modern theology in the Netherlands.<sup>78</sup> K.H. Roessingh, referred to in the introduction as the first to write a PhD dissertation on the history of Dutch modernism, mentions the year 1848.<sup>79</sup> Both of them, however, link the emergence of modern theology in the Netherlands to the academic career of one theologian: J.H. Scholten (1811-1885). In 1840, Scholten became a professor at the *rijksatheneum* in Franeker, which was an institute providing lectures on an academic level yet lacking the right to confer academic degrees on its students.<sup>80</sup> In his inaugural lecture on the life of Jesus, Scholten unmasked the view of the then leading Groningen theology of Jesus as ‘docetic’ – an adjective referring to the thought, disqualified as a heresy by the early church, that Jesus the Nazarene only *appeared* to be a person of flesh and blood, but never actually had a human body – by giving full emphasis to Jesus’s human nature. In his argument, echoes from Strauss’s attempt to come to a historically accurate biography of Jesus, laid down in *Das Leben Jesu*, could be heard.<sup>81</sup> In 1848, five years after his appointment as a professor at Leiden University, Scholten published the first part of a two-volume dogmatic study that would turn out to be his most important and most influential publication, *De leer der Hervormde Kerk in hare grondbeginselen, uit de bronnen voorgesteld en beoordeeld* (*The Principles of the Doctrine of the Reformed Church, Expounded and Evaluated from the Sources*).<sup>82</sup> Although he did not as such challenge the doctrines incorporated in the so-called Three Forms of Unity, accepted at the synod of Dordt in 1618 and 1619 as the official teachings of the Dutch Reformed Church, Scholten made clear that he could not interpret those doctrines in the same way as the theologians at the synod of Dordt had done. This was because Scholten identified the ‘inner testimony of the Holy Spirit’, the sole basis on which he felt it was legitimate to believe in God, with the voice of reason. Scholten’s argument implied that if man’s faculty of reason becomes more developed, the interpretation of doctrines necessarily changes. He still believed in the doctrine of predestination, for instance, but interpreted it, by taking contemporary scientific and scholarly insights into view, as the ultimate fulfilment of man’s ethical potential instead of as the absolution of sin.<sup>83</sup>

While the roots of modern theology in the Netherlands are thus traced back to either 1840 or 1848, the modernist movement is usually said to have emerged at the end of the 1850s. It was in these years that Scholten’s disciples and those of another ‘father of modern theology’, C.W. Opzoomer (1821-1892), began to climb the pulpit for the first time. Having a position as professor

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 81. See also: H. Berkhof, *Christelijk geloof* (Kampen [1973] 2007), 283-284; T.R. Barnard, ‘Moderne theologie’, in: G. Harinck et al. (eds.), *Christelijke Encyclopedie II* (Kampen 2005), 217-218, there 217; Benjamins, *Een en ander*, 57.

<sup>79</sup> Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 106.

<sup>80</sup> M. Groen, *Het wetenschappelijk onderwijs in Nederland van 1815 tot 1980: een onderwijskundig overzicht I. De wetgeving* (Eindhoven 1983), 24-25.

<sup>81</sup> Chr. Sepp, *Proeve eener pragmatische geschiedenis der theologie in Nederland van 1787 tot 1858* (Leiden [1867] 1869), 333-335.

<sup>82</sup> The English title is borrowed from: Bos, *Servants of the Kingdom*, 268.

<sup>83</sup> Brouwer, *De moderne richting*, 26-36, 39, 49-55; Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 117-147; Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 61-110; A.J. Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795. Haar geschiedenis en theologie in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Kampen 1974), 115-119; Benjamins, *Een en ander*, 57-70.

in philosophy at Utrecht University since 1846, Opzoomer championed that the only path towards knowledge is empiricism, constituting the totality of human perceptions and observations.<sup>84</sup> In the 1850s, Scholten and Opzoomer both arrived at the world view, outlook on life, and interpretation of Christianity as sketched in the second section of this chapter, the only difference being that the lines along which they legitimised their monistic, anti-supernaturalist and optimistic convictions were not identical. Scholten had ultimately reached the conclusion that it was justified to have the religious persuasion he had because logical reasoning could not result in anything else. For Opzoomer, who had initially been an orthodox rationalist, the rejection of miracles and the acknowledgement of God's existence in a monistic sense were legitimate because he found the confirmation thereof in his inner life. Although Scholten and Opzoomer would continue to publish on theo-philosophical issues after the 1850s, their respective epistemological positions essentially stayed the same. As ministers, Scholten's and Opzoomer's students preached a Christianity in which reason and emotional life played an equally important role. It was the historical-critical research of the Bible, to which at the time particularly the name of Leiden professor A. Kuenen (1828-1891) was attached, from which the first modernist ministers derived their images of the divine. This research, centred on the notion of historicity, presented a Jesus who was the incarnation of ethical purity instead of a miracle maker.<sup>85</sup>

A last 'father' of modern theology in the Netherlands was S. Hoekstra (1822-1898). Contrary to Scholten and Opzoomer, who applied the empirical methodology as used in the natural sciences to philosophy of religion, Hoekstra tried to explain religious belief from a psychological and anthropological perspective. Believing in God is justified and verified neither through reasoning nor on the basis of emotions, he argued, but because it is an intrinsic human need. In their confrontation with reality, Hoekstra elucidated, humans come to realise that they are imperfect beings. The dissatisfaction therewith makes people yearn for delivery from their imperfectability, leading them to believe in a higher power that is willing and able to support them in this endeavour. Is this 'higher power' not merely an illusion, therefore? No, Hoekstra stressed: the images and words that people use to give expression to this higher power are products of the mind, but the higher power itself is real – otherwise people would never have had any notion of being imperfect in the first place. After all, such a notion stems from the voice of conscience resounding within them. And in this voice of conscience, God, the higher power, reveals Himself.<sup>86</sup> Hoekstra became a professor at the Mennonite theological seminary in Amsterdam 1859, a position he would combine with a professorship at the University of Amsterdam from 1877 until his retirement in 1892. Compared to Scholten and Opzoomer, his influence on modern theology therefore made itself felt slightly later and eventually remained more limited. Yet, the three modernist subcurrents that would challenge the Scholtenian-Opzoomerian modernist mainstream most vehemently – ethical modernism in the 1870s, malcontentism in the 1900s and, as a continuation of the latter, right-wing modernism as of the 1910s – appealed to Hoekstra. The question of which elements of

<sup>84</sup> Brouwer, *De moderne richting*, 15-23, 38-39, 46-48; Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 147-165; Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 61-110; Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795*, 114, 118-119; Benjamins, *Een en ander*, 57-70.

<sup>85</sup> Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 110-111; Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 101-105.

<sup>86</sup> Brouwer, *De moderne richting*, 56-64; Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 166-182; Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 106-109; Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk vanaf 1795*, 122-124; Cossee, 'A.D. Loman en S. Hoekstra Bzn.', 81-83; Benjamins, *Een en ander*, 76-78.

modernism, as sketched in the second paragraph, these subcurrents exactly impugned, is answered in those paragraphs hereafter in which it is relevant to do so.

As previously stated, Scholten's and Opzoomer's students began to enter church life as ministers at the end of the 1850s. They did not only preach the modern theological ideas that they had learned during their studies from their pulpits; they also propagated these ideas through popularising books and brochures. The year in which the first of these popularising publications was issued is generally taken to be the actual 'birth year' of the modernist movement.<sup>87</sup> That year was 1857 and the publication in question was Busken Huet's *Brieven over den Bijbel*.<sup>88</sup> In their sermons and writings, modernist ministers propagated their monistic, anti-supernaturalist, optimistic and individualistic world view with much fervour, convinced as they were that only their ideas could preserve the social significance of Christianity in the future. Although orthodox Protestants and some later modernists blamed them for demolishing religious life without building something new, these early modernist ministers were in fact driven by strong apologetic motives. They were devoted to bridging what they perceived as a growing gap between Christianity and culture.<sup>89</sup>

The emerging modernist movement received a warm welcome from those with leading positions in Dutch intellectual and cultural life. It gained support in the bourgeoisie, the social stratum consisting of those who did not economically depend on manual labour and who were in a position to at least inform themselves about what was going on in intellectual and cultural life.<sup>90</sup> This was so, because the modernist movement offered a new way of believing, based on a theology 'verified' by contemporary scientific and scholarly insights, and harmonised with developments in cultural life. 'Liberalism' is the word that characterises cultural life in the mid-nineteenth century Netherlands (and the Western world at large). It was stamped by a firm belief in progress and the power of reason, a strong focus on the individual and the development of his abilities, an optimistic mentality, a tolerant attitude regarding matters of faith, and a fixation on public morals.<sup>91</sup> As a current in politics, liberalism took society to be a sum of individuals and as such served the interests of the bourgeoisie, defending a social life in which the government would interfere as little as possible and in which the nobility and the church would not have a privileged position. Because modernism equally championed the autonomy of the individual, claiming that the only authority in religious issues was man's inner

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<sup>87</sup> Herderscheë, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 100; Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 116; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 29.

<sup>88</sup> A content analysis and reception history of this publication is given in: D.J. Bos, "'Doch Christenen zijn nu eenmaal geen koeien.'" Over "Vragen en antwoorden. Brieven over den Bijbel" (1857-1858) van Cd. Busken Huet', in: F.G.M. Broeyer and D.Th. Kuiper (eds.), *Is 't waar of niet? Ophefmakende publicaties uit de 'lange' negentiende eeuw* (Zoetermeer 2005), 153-191.

<sup>89</sup> E.G.E. van der Wall, 'Believing, Belonging, and Adapting. The Case of Religious Modernism', in: B.E.J.H. Becking (ed.), *Orthodoxy, Liberalism, and Adaptation. Essays on Ways of Worldmaking in Times of Change from Biblical, Historical and Systematic Perspectives* (Leiden and Boston 2011), 91-114, there 94.

<sup>90</sup> Herderscheë writes that interest in the modernist movement "manifested itself particularly in the bourgeoisie, the nucleus of society and religious life" ("...openbaarde deze zich vooral onder den burgerstand, kern der maatschappij en van het godsdienstig leven.") See: Herderscheë, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 119. See also: Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 138; Busé, 'Het modernisme in Friesland omstreeks 1870', 109; Verberne, *Geschiedenis van Nederland*, 63; R.J. Staverman, *Volk in Friesland buiten de kerk* (Assen 1954), 131; P.Th. van Rooden, *Religieuze regimes. Over godsdiensten en maatschappij in Nederland 1570-1990* (Amsterdam 1996), 33; Schuurma, *Jaren van opgang*, 120; G.Th. Jensma, *De gemaskerde God. François HaverSchmidt en het Oera Linda-boek* (Zutphen 2004), 108; Harinck and Winkeler, 'De negentiende eeuw', 672-673.

<sup>91</sup> For this mid-nineteenth century cultural liberalism in the Netherlands, see: Aerts, *De letterheren*.



self, the view on modernism as the religious equivalent to political liberalism was unanimously endorsed in modernist circles until well into the 1880s, and was still being defended in the 1930s.<sup>92</sup> As stated in the introduction, theologian D.J. Bos consequently links the emergence of the modernist movement to what he calls “the rise of social middle groups, which wanted to be and could be treated on a more equal footing [with ministers],” as well as to the absence of an ‘apprenticeship’ for aspiring ministers in the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>93</sup> The finding that modernism met with response among culturally- and politically-liberal middle groups might also explain why it got a foothold not only in the socially heterogeneous Dutch Reformed Church, but also, and in higher relative numbers, in the socially more homogeneous church communities of Remonstrants, Mennonites and Lutherans. The bourgeoisie was overrepresented in these communities.<sup>94</sup>

However, the rapid rise of the modernist movement had already ended by the mid-1860s. The initial enthusiasm with which modernism was hailed in intellectual and culture life dampened. Moreover, the modernist movement was quickly confronted with ministers who went through a serious crisis of faith, came to the conclusion that the Bible and the church were no necessary ingredients of religious life, and decided to resign their office. Some of them continued to have modernist sympathies, examples of whom are mentioned in chapter 3, but others set themselves up as fierce opponents of the modernist movement, the consequences of which are analysed in chapter 8.

In addition, the expectation of the first modernist ministers to be welcomed in their congregations as liberators turned out to be a misjudgement. They felt that the supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity, and the dogmas stemming from it, hindered people from developing a truly personal, heart-felt faith and from truly interiorising the principles of life on which the words and conduct of Jesus were based.<sup>95</sup> The idolisation of Jesus, they reasoned, obscured what was actually expressed in his life and preaching, the true meaning of which historical-critical modern theology was revealing. It was therefore necessary to no longer sermonise about Jesus the miracle maker and Redeemer, but to preach to the faithful an image of Jesus that was, as modernist ministers believed, historically accurate. On Easter Sunday 1861, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., at the time a Dutch Reformed minister in Hoenderloo, and A.D. Loman (1823-1897), at the time a Lutheran minister in Amsterdam, straightforwardly told their congregations that the physical resurrection of Jesus was a myth.<sup>96</sup> Several Dutch Reformed ministers did the same,

<sup>92</sup> Chapter 9 zooms into this matter in more detail.

<sup>93</sup> “...de opkomst van maatschappelijke middengroepen, die meer op voet van gelijkheid benaderd wilden en konden worden.” Quoted from: Bos, *In dienst van het Koninkrijk*, 259. See also: *Ibid.*, 304.

<sup>94</sup> Verwey-Jonker, *Emancipatiebewegingen in Nederland*, 67-73.

<sup>95</sup> Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 132-135.

<sup>96</sup> P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Indrukken en herinneringen* (Amsterdam 1904), 80. Hugenholtz does not mention an exact year. He was a minister in Hoenderloo from 30 May 1858 till 20 October 1861. Journalist A.J. Klei says Hugenholtz denied the physical resurrection of Jesus in 1859. Historian P.P. de Baar thinks it was 1860. Theologian A. Vos believes it was 1861. Other sources referring to the incident in Hoenderloo do not make mention of a particular year. In his memoirs, Hugenholtz suggests that he held his Easter sermon in 1861 – he remarks that this sermon led to a permanent estrangement between him and his orthodox congregation, and that he *therefore* felt the need to leave Hoenderloo. Moreover, Buitenwerf-van der Molen, an expert on the history of early modernism, suggests that 1861 was the *first* year in which modernist ministers gave Easter sermons on the metaphorical character of Jesus’s resurrection. See: ‘Hugenholtz Jr. (Petrus Hermannus)’, in: J.P. de Bie and J. Loosjes (eds.), *Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden in Nederland IV* (The Hague 1931), 390-395, there 390; A.J. Klei, ‘De Vrije Gemeente looft prijzen uit’, *Trouw* XXXIV.9968 (27 October 1976), 2; P.P. de Baar, ‘Petrus Hermannus Hugenholtz

including H. Oort (1836-1911) in Santpoort on Easter Monday 1863,<sup>97</sup> Ph.R. Hugenholtz (1821-1889) in Amsterdam during Easter 1864,<sup>98</sup> and J. van Loenen Martinet in Heenvliet, A.C. Duker (1837-1915) in Geervliet and W.C. van Manen (1842-1905) in Abbenbroek during Easter 1866.<sup>99</sup> These ministers drew the ultimate conclusion from what Scholten had argued in his *Leer der Hervormde Kerk*: if it all came down to the *spirit* in which seventeenth-, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Dutch Reformed theologians had interpreted what they regarded as church doctrine, and not to their interpretations themselves, then it was no longer necessary to stick to those doctrines at all. While Scholten had still used a term such as ‘predestination’, for example, his students did not and championed absolute doctrinal freedom. Moulding one’s personal convictions in doctrinal terms, they felt, was an impediment to individual religious growth. Instead of as a liberation from suffocating dogmatic ties, what modernist ministers expected, many faithful considered modernist theological ideas and ecclesial ideals to be an attack on Christianity itself.<sup>100</sup>

The rise of the modernist movement therefore met with a fierce orthodox reaction. After the first King of the Netherlands, William I (1772-1843), had based the Dutch Reformed church community on new regulations in 1816, a discussion occurred on whether the regulation to uphold the ‘teachings of the Dutch Reformed Church’ meant that ministers, elders and deacons had to integrally endorse the Three Forms of Unity or not.<sup>101</sup> This question became more pressing than ever with modernists’ plea for absolute doctrinal freedom, giving some orthodox the final push to organise themselves as a separate faction, under the name of ‘*Confessioneele Vereeniging*’ in 1864. In doing so, these orthodox church members reinforced their efforts to make church incumbents sign the Three Forms of Unity.<sup>102</sup> It was in the circle of this association that Abraham Kuyper, who had been one of Scholten’s students at the theological faculty in Leiden, rose to prominence in the late 1860s. In the course of the 1870s, however, Kuyper and the *Confessioneele*

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(1834-1911). Stichter van de Vrije Gemeente’, *Ons Amsterdam* XLV.12 (December 1993), 308; A. Vos, ‘Vanuit de duisternis naar het licht’, in: H. Eschbach and R. van Putten (eds.), *Als God de hemel opent. Uitzien naar meer werk van de Geest* (Zoetermeer 2012), 94-107, there 104; M.F. Buitenwerf-van der Molen, ‘Waarlijk!? Het vraagteken achter het uitroepeten’, *Present* III.3 (April 2012), 6-7, there 6. Loman’s 1861 Easter sermon was published as: *Wat zoekt gij den Levende bij de Dooden* (Amsterdam 1862). See also: Cossee, ‘A.D. Loman en S. Hoekstra Bzn.’, 76.

<sup>97</sup> Oort’s necrologist C.E. Hooykaas says that Oort gave the Easter sermon in question during his *second* year in Santpoort. As he became a minister in Santpoort in December 1860, his second year began in December 1861 and ended in November 1862. Reefhuis mentions the year 1863 in his commemorative booklet on the history of the Dutch Reformed Church in Santpoort. In retrospect, Oort himself said it was probably 1863. See: H. Oort, ‘Voor ruim veertig jaar’, *De Hervorming* 1907-03 (19 January 1907), 19; C.E. Hooykaas, ‘Levensbericht van Henricus Oort’, in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1928-1929 II. Levensberichten* (Leiden 1929), 77-126, there 85; H. Reefhuis, *De Dorpskerk in Santpoort. 150 jaar in vogelvlucht* (Santpoort 1994), 32.

<sup>98</sup> ‘Hugenholtz (Philip Reinhard)’, in: De Bie and Loosjes (eds.), *Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden in Nederland IV* (The Hague 1931), 386-390, there 387-388.

<sup>99</sup> H. Oort, ‘Levensbericht van Johannes van Loenen Martinet’, in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1918-1919 II. Levensberichten* (Leiden 1919), 53-65, there 54-55.

<sup>100</sup> Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 114-115; N.A. Bruining, *Kerk en kerkgaan XII. Het modernisme in de gemeenten* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 8-9.

<sup>101</sup> Dealt with in: J. Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederlanden* (Groningen 1893), 363-433.

<sup>102</sup> A brief history is given in: E.G. Hoekstra and M.H. Ipenburg, *Handboek christelijk Nederland. Kerken, gemeenten, samenkomsten en vergaderingen* (Kampen 2008), 196-197.

*Vereeniging* gradually drifted apart – primarily due to Kuyper’s view on church reform (which are briefly sketched in chapter 4).

In 1867, only ten years after its emergence, the development of the modernist movement took a decisive turn. That year, the decision the Dutch Reformed Church synod had taken in 1852 to give all male church members a say, directly or indirectly, in the appointment of church councils – correlating with democratising tendencies in the new Dutch constitution of 1848 – came into effect. This decision had thus been taken before modernists began to enter the ecclesial scene, but it was strongly defended in modernist circles in the 1860s nonetheless.<sup>103</sup> After all, as Mosselmans and Van Gilse would explain in *De Hervorming* in 1873, it was completely in line with modernist ideals. Granting the right to be involved in the election of incumbents to all male members of the Dutch Reformed Church meant giving these members the responsibility to decide upon their spiritual growth for themselves, and the opportunity to get rid of orthodox church councils that thwarted this growth. Moreover, it strengthened the position of the local congregation at the expense of the church as a whole, the regulations of which hindered the modernist movement from thriving to the full.<sup>104</sup> Modernists expected that most members of the Dutch Reformed Church indeed longed to be freed from the doctrinal chains in which their church councils kept them. Yet the opposite happened: orchestrated by the *Confessioneele Vereeniging*, the church council elections in many Dutch Reformed congregations resulted in orthodox victories in 1867 and subsequent years. As chapter 4 shows, these victories, and the difficult position into which these victories manoeuvred them in countless congregations, incited thousands of modernist-minded members of the Dutch Reformed Church to eventually join the Remonstrant Brotherhood – an exodus that contributed to the transformation of the latter into an all-modernist church community.<sup>105</sup> Yet modernists did not defencelessly hand the Dutch Reformed Church over to orthodoxy. After 1867, factional quarrels intensified, and the need to come to some kind of organisation made itself felt in modernist circles.

Since 1866, modernist theologians met annually in Amsterdam, during the first week after Easter, to discuss theological, ecclesial and social issues with each other.<sup>106</sup> Several modernist ministers working in or in the vicinity of the Frisian town of Dokkum, who occasionally came together in a theological discussion group that one of them, Dutch Reformed A.S. Carpentier Alting (1837-1915), christened ‘*Onze Krans*’ (‘Our Circle’) as of 1866, copied this initiative. In 1868 they decided to convene annual meetings for all modernist ministers in the three

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<sup>103</sup> L. Knappert, *Geschiedenis der Hervormde Kerk onder de Republiek en het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden II. Geschiedenis der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk gedurende de 18<sup>e</sup> en 19<sup>e</sup> eeuw* (Amsterdam 1912), 338; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 30-31.

<sup>104</sup> [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], ‘Reorganisatie van de kerk’, *De Hervorming* 1873-31 (31 July 1873), 1-2. See also: Ignotus [B.D. Eerdmans], ‘Reactie of vooruitgang?’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* XLIII (1909), 1-16, there 6.

<sup>105</sup> Knappert, *Geschiedenis der Hervormde Kerk onder de Republiek en het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden II*, 338; Van Eijnatten en Van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis*, 274.

<sup>106</sup> A historical overview is given in: Kuenen, *Gedachtenisrede*; H. Oort, *Gedachtenisrede in de vergadering van moderne theologen op 13 April 1915* (Zaltbommel 1915); G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga and J. Lindeboom, *1866-1940. Gedachtenisrede in de vergadering van moderne theologen, 2 April 1940/25 jaren moderne theologie gespiegeld in 25 vergaderingen van moderne theologen* (Haarlem [1940]); S.L. Verheus, *Honderd jaar vergadering van moderne theologen (1865-1966). Kleine kroniek van een eeuw verbondenheid in vrijheid, op verzoek van het moderamen, ter gelegenheid van de honderdste vergadering* (s.l. [1966]).

northernmost provinces of the Netherlands.<sup>107</sup> Immediately during the first of these meetings, held on 27 October that same year, Dutch Reformed B.W. Colenbrander (1836-1923) and W. Zaalberg suggested establishing a “permanent association of modernists,” one that would include both ministers and modernist-minded churchgoers, and that would be active all year round. However, the idea was rejected. The majority of ministers present at the meeting were apparently against any kind of centralisation in the modernist movement that had no other purpose than to organise modernists more tightly. Colenbrander therefore put forward an amended proposal during the second meeting of modernist ministers in the northern provinces, on 22 October 1869. Instead of an association of modernists as such, he now proposed to establish an organisation with the specific objective to counteract ‘confessionalism’, the current in Christianity, in both its Protestant and Catholic form, that did not want to tolerate any views conflicting with church doctrines. Contrary to what Colenbrander and Zaalberg had envisioned in 1868, this organisation should not only be open to modernists. Moreover, although confessionalism was a particular threat in the Dutch Reformed Church, members of other church denominations should explicitly be welcomed into it as well. After all, confessionalism also made itself felt in society at large, for example in the zeal with which some orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics advocated denominational schools.<sup>108</sup> The Catholic variant of ‘confessionalism’ was usually called ‘ultramontanisme’.<sup>109</sup>

Colenbrander reaped a success this time. Together with Dutch Reformed ministers N.C. Balsem (1836-1884), J.F. Corstius and the aforementioned Carpentier Alting and Zaalberg, he was appointed at the same meeting to flesh out his proposal to create an anti-confessionalist association. On 18 March 1870, during a meeting of modernist ministers in the northern provinces specially convened for this quintet to concretise their plans, an association with the name ‘*Gewetensvrijheid*’ (‘Freedom of Conscience’), striving for “the preservation and advancement of absolute freedom of conscience in church and society,” was proposed. Those who attended the meeting gave the quintet, in the company of five non-ministers, the mandate to prepare the actual formation of the association. Because complaints about involvement with social issues were uttered during a discussion on *Gewetensvrijheid* at the annual meeting of modern theologians in Amsterdam, this provisional committee of ten decided to limit the sphere of activities of the association-to-be to church life. It also decided to hold an inaugural meeting in Utrecht on 15 July 1870. There, the name ‘*Gewetensvrijheid*’ was replaced with ‘*Nederlandsche Protestantenvoerbond*’, probably to accentuate the religious nature of the association, to stress that the association was meant to be a league of local branches, and to analogise with the names

<sup>107</sup> Jansen, “‘Kan er uit Nazareth iets goeds komen?’”, 1-3, 14-15. Jansen shows that there is much confusion regarding the build-up to the founding of the *Nederlandsche Protestantenvoerbond* in historiography on the NPB, particularly regarding the history of ‘*Onze Krans*’.

<sup>108</sup> “...een vaste vereeniging van modernen...” Quoted from: [Van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvoerbond 1870-1895*, 3. The paragraph as a whole is also based on: B.W. Colenbrander, *Beknopte geschiedenis van het Christendom I* (Arnhem 1888), 279-281; Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 40-41.

<sup>109</sup> Exemplary in this respect is Mosselmans’s exclamation that “confessionalism in the Protestant Church is what ultramontanisme is in the Church of Rome. They are siblings.” (“*Wat het Ultramontanisme is in de Roomsche kerk, dat is in de Protestantische kerk het Confessionnalisme. Dat zijn broertjes van elkaar.*”) Quoted from: [B.C.J. Mosselmans], *Het Ultramontanisme. Eene toespraak in eene openbare vergadering* (Arnhem [1873]), 11. Mosselmans claimed that orthodoxy was not based on the true principles of Protestantism, but rather on principles similar to those of Rome. Chapter 3 deals with this often-repeated claim in more detail. See also: W.C. van Manen, *Ultramontaansch Utopia: een land van belofte? Met een vertaling van den Syllabus* (Arnhem 1876).

similar leagues of modernist Protestants carried abroad.<sup>110</sup> At a follow-up meeting, taking place in Utrecht on 11 October 1870, some final decisions were made. The aim of the NPB was definitively formulated as “the preservation and promotion of evangelical freedom in the Protestant church denominations.” Every year, a general assembly would be convened at an altering location, but always on or around 31 October, Reformation Day. Finally, C.W. Opzoomer was elected as the first official chairman of the NPB.<sup>111</sup>

Although the urge to counteract confessionalism was generally felt in modernist circles, the NPB did not immediately attract much support. The number of those who joined the association in the first year of its existence was even “so small,” as chairman Opzoomer lamented at the first annual meeting of the NPB, held in Utrecht in 1871, that “many of us have come to question if this first general assembly ought to be the last.” Opzoomer had expected that joining the NPB, established “to uphold the true spirit of the Reformation [and] to withstand a strong rival, which [...] seeks to kill the soul of Luther,” would have been rather obvious for all anti-confessionalist Protestants, “because we carry within us the awareness that the grand spirit of the Reformers is also our spirit.” However, potential sympathisers, whom he found among “the friends of science” (intellectuals) and in “the industrious and (right-)thinking bourgeoisie,” were reluctant to become NPB members, because of a lack of enthusiasm for the formation of the kind of group that the NPB wanted to be. Those potential sympathisers were still oriented towards their own congregations, considering a national league of anti-confessionalist branches as unnecessary and as a potential threat to their freedom to make their own decisions.<sup>112</sup> This was also what Kuenen raised as an objection to the NPB in early 1872. Confessionalism, he reasoned, was a threat that made itself primarily felt at the congregational level. As a league of branches consisting of members with *different* ecclesial backgrounds, the NPB was thus unfit to aspire after its aim: after all, the Remonstrant members of an NPB branch, for example, had nothing to do with what was going on in the local Dutch Reformed congregation. Moreover, Kuenen feared that the NPB, an association concerning itself with religious issues, could only realise its aim if all modernists conformed to the decisions it made. In religious issues, however, only the

<sup>110</sup> Chapter 11 deals with these leagues outside the Netherlands. That the NPB wanted to be a vanguard is exemplified in the way the name of the association was written. As of the general assembly of 1872, it was called ‘*het Nederlandsch Protestantenvond*’, because linguists M. de Vries (1820-1892) and L.A. te Winkel (1809-1868) considered the word ‘*bond*’, treated as a masculine noun in common parlance, to be a diminutive of the neuter noun ‘*verbond*’. (Both words mean ‘league’ in English.) As of the general assembly of 1878, the NPB was called ‘*de Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*’ again.

<sup>111</sup> “...de handhaving en bevordering van de onvoorwaardelijke gewetensvrijheid in kerk en maatschappij.”; “...de handhaving en bevordering der evangelische vrijheid in de protestantsche kerkgenootschappen.” Quoted from: Steur, ‘Archief van het hoofdbestuur van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond’, 140-143. The paragraph as a whole is also based on: [Van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond 1870-1895*, 3-5; Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 41.

<sup>112</sup> “...zoo klein, dat bij velen onzer reeds de vraag is opgekomen, of deze eerste algemeene vergadering niet de laatste behoort te zijn...”; “...den echten geest der hervorming te handhaven [...] en een machtige partij te weerstaan, die [...] de ziel van Luther zoekt te dooden.”; “...omdat wij het bewustzijn in ons dragen, dat de geest der groote hervormers ook onze geest is.”; “...de vrienden der wetenschap...”; “...in den werkzamen en denkenden middelstand...” Quoted from: C.W. Opzoomer, ‘Toespraak ter opening van de eerste algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond, gehouden te Utrecht den 31 October 1871’, 4-6. This speech was issued as an appendix to: *Verslag der eerste algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond* (Leeuwarden [1871]). See also: Krijger, ‘De NPB. Zelfportretten door de jaren heen’, there 3. Already in 1862, Opzoomer had accentuated that the modernist movement was a continuation of the sixteenth-century Reformation. See: Opzoomer, *De geest der nieuwe rigting*, 22.

individual conscience should be leading: “we should neither give up a piece of our independence, nor bear the responsibility for measures devised and executed by a certain collectivity.”<sup>113</sup>

A second, related reason not to join the NPB, Opzoomer recognised, had to do with the circumstance that, in spite of its ambition to include both modernist and non-modernist opponents of confessionalism, the NPB had so far only gained any sympathy among the former. In addition, its founding fathers and its first board members were all modernists. In modernist circles, it was therefore feared that the development of the NPB into an all-modernist instead of a general anti-confessionalist association might deprive modernists of the support of the so-called *evangelischen* (about whom more is said in subsequent chapters) and moderate orthodoxy in the attempt to ‘uphold and advance Evangelical freedom’ at which the NPB stated to aim.<sup>114</sup> What Opzoomer failed to notice was that there even existed a third reason for potential modernist sympathisers to keep aloof from the NPB. As previously stated, contrary to what its founding fathers had originally had in mind, the NPB confined its activities to church life. Modernists who felt that the institution of the church had permanently served its turn, such as L.W.E. Rauwenhoff (1828-1889), blamed the association for that.<sup>115</sup>

On 18 January 1872, the board of the NPB held a meeting with several modernist theologians and ministers during which it gave in to these objections. This persuaded critics such as Scholten, Kuenen and Rauwenhoff to become NPB members, and resulted in a reformulation of the aim of the association at the second annual NPB meeting in late October that same year. The NPB was formally changed into “an association of all who want to work together to advance the free development of religious life, both within the circle of church denominations and in any other field.”<sup>116</sup> With this more generally formulated aim, Kuenen’s objection was met. The pursuit of doctrinal freedom might only be in the interest of modernist members of the Dutch Reformed Church and, to a lesser extent, of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, as Remonstrant and Mennonite modernists were not confronted with confessionalist attempts to chase them out of their church communities. The advancement of the free development of religious life, on the other hand, was also in the interest of the latter. Therewith, the interdenominational character that the NPB wanted to have was fully legitimised. Moreover, the NPB now accentuated to lack the intention to turn the modernist movement into a tightly organised, centralised *party*, for it did not specify *how* it wanted its members to contribute to this advancement. The new aim was also meant to reassure those who feared that the all-modernist character of the NPB prevented *evangelische* and moderately orthodox Protestants from making common cause with modernists against confessionalism. The NPB now no longer called suspicion upon itself that the advancement of doctrinal freedom was in fact meant to let modernists gain control in

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<sup>113</sup> “*Als modernen mogen wij niet een stuk onzer zelfstandigheid prijsgeven en evenmin een deel op ons nemen van de verantwoordelijkheid voor de maatregelen, door een zeker collectivum ontworpen en uitgevoerd.*” Quoted from: A. Kuenen, ‘De moderne richting en de Protestantenvond’, *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* 1872-02 (11 January 1872), 1-2. The quote is on p. 2. Kuenen’s article was a response to: Eenige leden van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond, ‘Een ernstige vraag’, *Ibid.* 1871-152 (21 December 1871), 1-2.

<sup>114</sup> Opzoomer, ‘Toespraak ter opening van de eerste algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond’, 6-8. See also: [Van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond 1870-1895*, 6-7.

<sup>115</sup> K.H. Boersema, ‘Rede uitgesproken te Utrecht den 28<sup>sten</sup> October 1930, ter gelegenheid van het 60-jarig bestaan van den Bond’, in: *Jaarboek NPB 1931 I*, 37-65, there 39; Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 42.

<sup>116</sup> “*...eene vereeniging van allen, die willen samenwerken om de vrije ontwikkeling van het godsdienstig leven te bevorderen, zoo binnen den kring der kerkgenootschappen als op ieder ander gebied.*” Quoted from: Steur, ‘Archief van het hoofdbestuur van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond, 1870-1925’, 142. See also: *Verslag NPB 1872*, 4.

church life. The advancement of doctrinal freedom and the growth of the influence of the modernist movement, out of which the NPB recruited its members, were two separate things. Finally, to gain the sympathy of someone as Rauwenhoff, the sphere of activities of the NPB now came to lie outside of church life as well.<sup>117</sup>

With its new aim, the NPB was shown to accept that it had become an association both for and of modernists. ‘Advancing the free development of religious life’ did not refer in any way to Christianity and was hence unsuitable to gain support in *evangelische* and moderately orthodox circles. Now that this was clear, however, the NPB could welcome a rapidly growing number of modernists as its members and soon developed into the organisational centre of the modernist movement.<sup>118</sup> In 1873, national secretary A.G. van Hamel (1842-1907) could cheerfully inform the general assembly that “the circle that the NPB encloses has become larger.” By attributing part of the growth of the NPB in the last year to the transformation of the Leiden-based *Vereeniging tot handhaving der protestantsche vrijheid* (Association for the Preservation of Protestant Liberty), founded in 1869,<sup>119</sup> into an NPB branch, Van Hamel pointed at an interesting phenomenon.<sup>120</sup> This Leiden association was one of several independent, local associations of modernists that had come into being before or slightly after the founding of the NPB, such as *Licht, Liefde, Leven* (Light, Love, Life) in The Hague in 1865, the *Vereeniging tot handhaving en voortplanting van het liberale beginsel* (Association for the Preservation and Promotion of the Liberal Religious Principle) in Amsterdam in 1868, *Evangelie en Vrijheid* (Gospel and Freedom) in Enschede around 1870, and *Evangelische Vooruitgang* (Evangelical Progress) in Middelburg in 1871.<sup>121</sup> Eventually, all of these associations would simply affiliate themselves to the NPB, merge with local NPB branches, or liquidate themselves to enable an NPB branch to get off the ground. Elsewhere, other existing organised or more informal networks of modernists, such as branches of the philanthropic *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* (Society for Public Advancement), modernist-dominated church councils and book clubs, were at the basis of an NPB branch. Ministers were particularly active in bringing branches into being. The presence of local infrastructures on which the NPB could build and the enthusiasm of ministers can yet only partially explain the rapid growth of the association. Merely by existing, the NPB provided the modernist movement with an organisational focal point as well as a point of identification. As such, it fostered a sense of belonging among modernists that went beyond church walls. Joining the NPB meant expressing solidarity with like-minded Protestants all across the Netherlands and showing to be dedicated to the modernist cause. Moreover, the NPB facilitated a circulation of ideas, people and resources of which modernists who wanted to organise themselves on the local level could make use.<sup>122</sup> As the next chapter shows, *De Hervorming* played a crucial role in that.

<sup>117</sup> Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 42.

<sup>118</sup> For the numerical development of the NPB, see appendix B. Yet some branches did have *evangelischen* among their members, as in Zuidlaren, Oostwold and Buitenpost. See: J. Bruinwold Riedel, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De evangelischen en de Protestantenbond’, *De Hervorming* 1887-35 (27 August 1887), 139-140. In view of the membership of the NPB as a whole, however, their numbers were negligible.

<sup>119</sup> ‘Kerk- en schoolnieuws’, *Dagblad van Zuid-Holland en 's-Gravenhage* CCII.27 (2 February 1869), 2.

<sup>120</sup> “De kring dien het omsluit is veeleer ruimer geworden.” Quoted from: *Verslag NPB 1873*, 6-7. The quote is on p. 6.

<sup>121</sup> A.I., ‘Een Haagsche loterij’, *Het Nederlandsch Magazijn* II.48<sup>(new series)</sup> (1866), 379; J. Cramer, ‘Eene bevestigingspreek’, *Stemmen voor Waarheid en Vrede* V (Amsterdam 1868), 467-483, there 471; P. Smits, *Kerk en stad. Een godsdienst-sociologisch onderzoek met inbegrip van een religiografie van de industriestad Enschede* (The Hague 1952), 222; P.F. van Slijpe, ‘Binnenland – Uit Middelburg’, *De Hervorming* 1896-48 (28 November 1896), 190.

<sup>122</sup> Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 43-48.

## 2. THE MODERNIST ‘TRIBUNE’

### 1. A Liberal Protestant ‘Gentleman’

A nineteenth-century French expression states that a journal is ‘*un monsieur*’, a gentleman. Obviously, this expression should be taken metaphorically: it means to say that in the content of a newspaper, or any periodical for that matter, the personal preferences and opinions of its editors are implied. In late 1934, however, Dutch Reformed minister J.J. Meyer (1878-1956), editor of the church affairs section in newspaper *Het Vaderland* (*The Fatherland*), took this expression all too literally.<sup>1</sup> As if he was dealing with an actual person, Meyer wrote an obituary notice – indicated by the dagger that he used in the heading – on the magazine *De Hervorming*, published in *Het Vaderland* on 25 December 1934. *De Hervorming* had just been issued for a final time. With assent, Meyer quoted its editor-in-chief D. Drijver (1879-1946), who resignedly acknowledged that the magazine “had had its day.”<sup>2</sup>

Yet Meyer was sad to see it disappear, as he made clear in a follow-up article – which was styled as an actual *in memoriam*, also reverentially carrying a dagger in its heading – published in *Het Vaderland* four days later. Nostalgically, he called to mind that he had come to know *De Hervorming* in his earliest days as a minister,<sup>3</sup> when he “[had] read the names of those who contributed to the very well-written magazine with awe.” ‘Authoritative’ or ‘leading’, and ‘representative’, were the words most applicable to the magazine, which, he presumed to know, had first been issued as a successor to the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* (*New Ecclesial Weekly*) in 1875. Meyer was mistaken here. *De Hervorming* had already come to replace the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* two years before; 1875 was the year in which it was purchased by the NPB. As an opinion magazine for and of the modernist movement, Meyer continued, it had long held a monopoly: “it was modernists’ only magazine with theological significance. The theological professors used it to exchange their views, while it also addressed ecclesial, social and aesthetic [cultural, TK] questions of the day. [...] Taking the general lead [in modernist circles] was its chief aim.” Gradually, in the course of the early twentieth century, changing circumstances had started to impede this aim. New magazines had come to be issued that targeted specific audiences within the modernist movement, such as members of a particular church denomination, or that limited their scope to a particular region. Nationally distributed dailies as the *Algemeen Handelsblad* (*General Trade Journal*), the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* (*New Rotterdam Newspaper*) and *Het Vaderland* had begun to cover religious affairs more extensively in separate sections, the editors of which not uncommonly sympathised with the modernist movement. (Meyer himself may serve as an example in this respect.) As a result, *De Hervorming* had been subjected to several editorial changes as of the late 1910s, which,

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<sup>1</sup> See also: T.E.M. Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 37-39. Meyer was an editor of the church affairs section in *Het Vaderland* between 1918 and 1943. In addition, he wrote in the modernist-socialist magazine *De Blijde Wereld*, starting as a regular contributor in 1907 and becoming a member of its board of editors in 1918, and continued to regularly contribute to its successor *Tijd en Taak* (*Times and Task*) from 1932 until 1937. Between 1929 and 1931, Meyer was editor-in-chief of the liberal Reformed magazine *Kerk en Volk*. See: ‘Ds. J.J. Meyer overleden’, *IJmuiders Courant* LXXI.114 (20 November 1956), 2.

<sup>2</sup> “...zijn tijd heeft gehad.” Quoted in: [J.J. Meyer], ‘Tijdschriften – “De Hervorming” †’, *Het Vaderland* (25 December 1934), morning paper C, 12. Meyer referred to: D. Drijver, ‘Binnenland – Afscheid’, *De Hervorming* 1934-11 (21 December 1934), 81-82, there 82.

<sup>3</sup> Meyer became a minister in 1902. His first congregation was in Noordgouwe, a village in Zeeland.



however, had only caused it to lose favour even more. Further decreasing its appeal was its affiliation with the NPB, which had begun to lose its central position within the modernist movement. All in all, Meyer concluded, the history of *De Hervorming* was one of “glory and decay,” ultimately going completely to ruin due to the “disintegration and deterioration [...] that threaten the once shining building of the Dutch League of Protestants with [utter] destruction.”<sup>4</sup>

Meyer briefly sketched the history of *De Hervorming*, raising several questions. *De Hervorming*, he mentioned, was ‘authoritative’ or ‘leading’. What did this leading role look like in practice? Which functions exactly did the magazine have in the modernist movement? In order to be ‘leading’, its editors had to be ‘*messieurs*’, in the metaphorical sense this term had in a journalistic context: in helping their modernist audience to form an opinion, they could not hesitate to give their own opinion. At the same time, Meyer characterised *De Hervorming* as ‘representative’. In order for their magazine to be so, its editors had to reckon with the circumstance that their audience was multiform and varicoloured, having various interests and ideals. Did the tension between being leading and being representative cause difficulties and frictions in the modernist movement? Did it ever put *De Hervorming* as such at stake? As Meyer highlighted, the editorial policy of the magazine was changed several times. What did these changes imply and what were the motives behind them? Finally, Meyer stressed that *De Hervorming* could not retain its position in the modernist movement. Why was that the case? Meyer partially answered himself the questions of why *De Hervorming* was leading, representative, subject to editorial changes several times and ultimately doomed to disappear, by pointing out its ties to the NPB. But why then did the NPB go through a process of changes that led to, as Meyer phrased it, “reduced viability”?<sup>5</sup>

By giving an in-depth analysis of the history of *De Hervorming*, firmly embedded within the context of the Dutch press in general and the liberal Protestant press in particular, this chapter simultaneously outlines the history of the NPB, and as such of the modernist movement, from 1870 to the 1930s. (Subsequent chapters analyse specific aspects of that history in closer detail.) The history of Dutch liberal Protestantism runs parallel to, and is mirrored in, the history of *De Hervorming*. But *De Hervorming* did not merely reflect the development of the modernist movement; it also influenced that development. By analysing how it fulfilled and then lost its role as the main platform for discussion in modernist circles, this chapter accentuates that no one, to quote C.M. van Driel, “who wants to know the history of Dutch liberal Protestantism can

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<sup>4</sup> “Wij kennen de Hervorming van den tijd dat wij pas het predikambt bekleedden, en vol ontzag de namen lazen van hen die aan het zéér goede blad medewerkten.”; “Het was het eenige blad der Modernen met theologische beteekenis. De theologische professoren gebruikten het voor hun gedachtenwisseling, terwijl ook actueele vragen van kerkelijke, sociale en aesthetischen aard aan de orde kwamen. [...] Algemeen leiding geven was de hoofdzaak.”; “...glorie en verval...”; “...ontbinding en verval [...], welke het eenmaal schoone gebouw van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond met ondergang bedreigen.” Quoted from: J.J. Meyer, “‘De Hervorming’ †”, *Het Vaderland* (29 December 1934), evening paper C, 2. In the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, the disappearance of *De Hervorming* was only briefly referred to. See: ‘Kerknieuws – Varia’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* CVII.35130 (26 November 1934), evening paper, 14. In the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, slightly more attention was paid to it. An editor of this newspaper contrasted the recent history of *De Hervorming* with its earliest history: in the past years, the magazine had merely been the bulletin of the NPB, supplemented with sections on church life, foreign affairs and book reviews, while it had once been “the arena [in which] the various currents and opinions among modernists [found expression]” (“...het kamp-perk [...] van de verschillende richtingen en standpunten onder de modernen”). Quoted in: ‘Geestelijk leven – “De Hervorming” exit’, *De Indische Courant* XIV.84 (21 December 1934), 9.

<sup>5</sup> “...verminderde levensvatbaarheid...” Quoted from: J.J. Meyer, “‘De Hervorming’ †”, *Het Vaderland* (29 December 1934), evening paper C, 2.

leave *De Hervorming* unread.”<sup>6</sup> An overview of the number of pages, number of subscriptions, subtitles, editors-in-chief, subscription rates, sheet sizes, and publishers that the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and *De Hervorming* have had throughout their history is given in appendix A.

## 2. *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*

In 1868, several modernist ministers assembled in the interdenominational *Zaanlandsche Predikantenvereeniging* (Zaanland Association of Ministers), troubled over the growing amount of orthodox victories in Dutch Reformed church council elections, took the initiative to found an opinion magazine dedicated to modernist interests.<sup>7</sup> According to a short notification in the politically liberal *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, the editors-to-be of this new magazine, Dutch Reformed minister J. van Loenen Martinet and Lutheran minister J.H.C. Heijse (1839-1913), were eager to strive for “the promotion of freedom, enlightenment and truth,” by which they hoped to bring closer “a free church in a free state.”<sup>8</sup> This expression could be frequently heard in modernist circles at the time, but did not summarise a typically modernist ideal. Kuypersians used it as their battle cry as well, though attaching a different meaning to it.<sup>9</sup> A church was ‘free’ in Kuypersian eyes if it was no longer endangered by unorthodox theology and government interference, while it was ‘free’ from a modernist perspective if creedalism was absent in it. In other newspapers, advertorials reported that the new modernist magazine, to be issued as of 28 January 1869, had the intention “to throw light upon and defend the modernist principles.”<sup>10</sup> Moreover, it wanted to proactively counteract “the agitation stirred up by confessionalists” and to stimulate

<sup>6</sup> “Wie de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse vrijzinnig-protestantisme wil kennen, kan “De Hervorming” niet ongelezen laten.” Quoted from: Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 136.

<sup>7</sup> The *Zaanlandsche Predikantenvereeniging* was one of many associations that periodically convened meetings in which ministers discussed ecclesial, theological and social affairs with each other. The first of these was the *Friesche Predikantenvereeniging* (Association of Ministers in Friesland), founded in 1844. See: J. Vree, “De kraaienplaag”. Een halve eeuw predikantenverenigingen in de Nederlandse samenleving (1844-1892)”, in: D.Th. Kuiper et al. (eds.), *Predikant in Nederland (1800-heden)* (Kampen 1997), 107-151. Associations of ministers could have a regional or national, denominational or interdenominational, and theological or political basis. Examples are mentioned in: A. Maagh Kniphuysen, *De Predikanten-Vereeniging in de classis Hoorn. Herinneringen en mededeelingen bij de herdenking van haar veertig-jarig bestaan (1849-1889)* (s.l. 1889); J.I. Doedes, *De Zuid-Hollandsche Predikanten-Vereeniging, in het licht der geschiedenis* (Rotterdam 1892); P.J.B.K. Simon van der Aa, J.K. Koch and G.J. van Lakerveld, *Welkomstgroet, feestrede en gelegenheidsgedicht, uitgesproken op de 50<sup>e</sup> verjaardag der Noord-Brabantsche-Limburgsche Predikantenvereeniging in ‘Concordia’ te Breda den 23<sup>en</sup> Juni 1897* (Bergen op Zoom [1897]); W.F.K. Klinkenberg, *De evangelische richting* (Baarn 1907), 3; ‘Kerknieuws – Een socialistische predikantenvereeniging’, *Het Vaderland* (13 March 1920), evening paper B, 4; N. van der Zijpp, ‘Friesche Doopsgezinde Predikanten Vereeniging’, in: H.S. Bender et al. (eds.), *The Mennonite Encyclopedia. A Comprehensive Reference Work on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Movement II* (Scottsdale 1956), 402-403; J. Vree, ‘Het Réveil als splijtzwan in de predikantenkring (1844-1870)’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* LXIII (December 2005), 87-101, there 98. The interdenominational character of the *Zaanlandsche Predikantenvereeniging* is mentioned in: A. de Groot, ‘Loenen Martinet, Johannes van’, in: D. Nauta et al. (eds.), *BLGNP I* (Kampen 1978), 137; Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 137; W.C. van Manen, ‘1869 – Januari – 1894’, *De Hervorming* 1894-04 (27 January 1894), 14-15, there 14; J.C. van Slee, ‘De Hervorming – 1875 11 November 1925’, *Ibid.* 1925-45 (7 November 1925), 357-358, there 357.

<sup>8</sup> “...het bevorderen van vrijheid, verlichting en waarheid...”; “...de vrije kerk in den vrije staat...” Quoted from: ‘Binnenland’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* XXV.338 (6 December 1868), 8.

<sup>9</sup> H. Daalder, *Van oude en nieuwe regenten. Politiek in Nederland* (Amsterdam 1995), 195.

<sup>10</sup> “...de moderne beginselen toe te lichten en te verdedigen.” Quoted from, e.g.: ‘Bijvoegsel’, *Utrechtsch Provinciaal en Stedelijk Dagblad* 1868-299 (14 December 1868), 5; ‘Binnenlandsche nieuwstijdingen’, *Provinciale Overijsselsche en Zwolsche Courant* LXXXVIII (18 December 1868), 2; ‘Kerk- en schoolnieuws’, *Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant* XLV.150 (19 December 1868), 2. The date of issue is mentioned in, e.g.: ‘Advertentiën’, *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant* 1869-04 (5 January 1869), 4; ‘Advertentiën’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XLII.11542 (6 January 1869), 4.

engagement concerning church affairs within the modernist community.<sup>11</sup> The magazine was christened '*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*' ('*New Ecclesial Weekly*'), in order to stress that it wished to function as the liberal equivalent to the *Kerkelijk Weekblad* (*Ecclesial Weekly*).<sup>12</sup> This last magazine had been founded as '*Kerkelijk Maandblad*' ('*Ecclesial Monthly*') in 1855 and was, after it had been turned into a weekly in 1865, closely associated to the *Confessioneele Vereeniging*.<sup>13</sup>

With the exception of only a handful of issues and cuttings, the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* has not survived the ravages of time. Fortunately, information about the magazine can be deduced from a couple of other contemporary sources, making it possible to acquire a fairly clear general impression of the range of topics this magazine covered and to say something about its regular features. The first edition of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* was issued by I. de Haan's publishing house in the North Holland town of Krommenie.<sup>14</sup> Due to advertisements in other periodicals, the content of this first lost edition is nevertheless still known. In the opening article, titled '*Wat wij willen*' ('*What We Want*'), the editors gave account of their intentions. The next three leading articles all dealt with quarrels between modernists and confessionalists. The remaining columns were filled with short announcements and reports; a survey of Dutch and foreign news items of which the editors thought all liberal Protestants in the Netherlands should take notice; a detailed enumeration of all Dutch Reformed, Evangelical Lutheran, Mennonite or Remonstrant ministers who had been called, in the preceding week, as pastors by congregations all across the country (so-called '*beroepingsberichten*'); a section in which the editors briefly answered letters sent to them by readers or antagonists; and advertisements.<sup>15</sup>

The annual subscription fee was f 4.60,<sup>16</sup> which at the time was not remarkably cheap for a weekly, but not extremely expensive either. Compared to other religious weeklies, however, the fee of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* was rather low. The *Christelijk Weekblad* (*Christian Weekly*), the *Kerkelijk Weekblad*, *De Bazuin* (*The Trumpet*) and the *Kerkelijke Courant* (*Ecclesial Newspaper*), to name just a few examples, annually charged f 5.20, f 6.-, f 6.- and f 8.50 for a subscription.<sup>17</sup> Since these magazines did not contain substantially more pages or more advertisements than the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, and since there are no

<sup>11</sup> "...het tegengaan van de woelingen der confessioneele partij en opwekking van kerkelijken zin onder de modernen." Quoted from: 'Leeuwarden, 17 December', *Leeuwarder Courant* CXIV.101 (18 December 1868), 1.

<sup>12</sup> In the late-nineteenth century Dutch press, it was no oddity for a newly-founded magazine to have the adjective 'new' in its name, followed by the name of an already existing magazine of which it wanted to be the counterpart. The *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* (*New Israelite Weekly*), for example, was created in 1865 as orthodox alternative to the *Israëlietisch Weekblad*. See: I. Lipschits, *Honderd jaar NIW. Het Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad, 1865-1965* (Amsterdam 1966), 9-11. Likewise, *De Nieuwe Gids* (*The New Guide*) presented itself in 1885 as a more progressive alternative to the literary journal *De Gids*. See: H.R.J. van der Veen, 'Eenheid in verscheidenheid', *Bzzlletin* XIV.129 (1985), 3-8, there 3.

<sup>13</sup> 'Kerkelijk Maandblad', in: J.H. Brouwer (ed.), *Encyclopedie van Friesland* (Amsterdam 1958), 403.

<sup>14</sup> 'Advertentiën', *Nieuwsblad voor den Boekhandel* XXXVI.1 (7 January 1869), 4; XXXVI.2 (14 January 1869), 10.

<sup>15</sup> E.g.: 'Advertentiën', *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* XXVI.29 (29 January 1869), 4; 'Advertentiën', *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant* 1869-26 (30 January 1869), 4.

<sup>16</sup> The f-sign is the currency symbol of the Dutch guilder.

<sup>17</sup> Some weeklies charged less than f 4.50 for an annual subscription, such as the *Weesper Courant*. *Nieuws- en Advertentieblad* (f 2.60), the *Tielsche Stads- en Arrondissements-Weekblad* (f 3.-), the *Zevenbergsche Courant*. *Kantonmaal Nieuws- en Advertentieblad* (f 3.60) and the *Alkmaarsche Courant* (f 4.-). Others charged higher rates, for example the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* (f 5.50), the *Maçonniek Weekblad* (f 6.-), the *Kerkelijke Courant*. *Weekblad voor de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk* (f 8.50) and the *Nederlandsche Spectator* (f 12.60). These figures are extracted from: 'Lijst der dag- en weekbladen in Nederland, in April 1869 verschijnende', *Staatkundig en Staathuishoudkundig Jaarboekje* XXI (Amsterdam 1869), 521-525.

archives of publisher De Haan or the *Zaanlandsche Predikantenvereeniging* that can be consulted, one can only speculate about the motives behind this marked differentiation in pricing. De Haan, who published other modernist literature as well,<sup>18</sup> was apparently able to keep the printing costs down, or might have given the Zaanland ministers who took the initiative to found the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* a discount. This last possibility would have been anything but unusual. Publishers were willing to keep the printing price of a periodical down if they expected that the periodical would attract a lot of subscribers.<sup>19</sup> Seemingly, De Haan believed that the publication of a new religious periodical for the benefit of the modernist movement had enough potential to charge his clients a low rate. There is every reason to assume this, as there was no other weekly issued modernist opinion magazine in the Netherlands at the time. The *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, De Haan and his modernist clients must have thought, would therefore obviously meet a need.

The format of the first issue would basically stay the same in the years to come. The size of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* became larger in July 1869. As a result of the abolition of the nearly sixty-year old government measure to levy taxes on the publishing of newspapers and journals, which had been introduced during the Napoleonic occupation of the Netherlands, issuing a periodical became a lot easier and less expensive. This legislative amendment came into effect on 1 July 1869.<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the publisher and editors of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* decided not to lower the price of an annual subscription, but to print the magazine on larger sized sheets instead. According to advertisements published in the *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant*, this decision was primarily inspired by an increasing amount of both subscriptions and potential contributors who were willing to provide the editors with ongoing input.<sup>21</sup> As of 10 August 1871, the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* was issued by the Erven B. van der Kamp's publishing house in Groningen.<sup>22</sup> In November, Mosselmans and Van Gilse replaced Van Loenen Martinet and Heijse as its editors, though the latter did stay involved with the weekly as 'regular contributors'.<sup>23</sup> The circumstance that both Mosselmans and Van Gilse were ministers in Groningen at the time will have probably influenced this editorial substitution. The switch to another publisher and the change of editors were, without a doubt, closely connected, but did not completely coincide. Van Driel's implication in his 2006 article, one of the few publications in which the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* is mentioned, that the magazine's first issue published by the Erven B. van der Kamp had also been the first issue edited by Mosselmans and Van Gilse, is therefore incorrect. He is also wrong to state that these two events took place in 1872.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> E.g.: W. de Meijer, *Gods wondermacht en onze godsdienst* (Krommenie 1867) and the twelve-volume series *Taal des Geloofs* (Krommenie 1867-1870; Haarlem 1871-1878).

<sup>19</sup> A description of publishers' roles in Dutch nineteenth- and twentieth-century journalism, is given in: J.M.H.J. Hemels, 'De dagbladuitgever. Van courantier naar ondernemer', in: J.J. van Cuilenburg, P.C. Neijens and O. Scholten (eds.), *Media in overvloed* (Amsterdam 1999), 40-53.

<sup>20</sup> Hemels, *De Nederlandse pers voor en na de afschaffing van het dagbladzegel*, 193.

<sup>21</sup> 'Advertentiën', *Oprechte Haarlemsche Courant* 1869-153 (2 July 1869), 4; 1869-159 (9 July 1869), 4; 1869-165 (15 July 1869), 4.

<sup>22</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet and J.H.C. Heijse], 'Bericht', *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* 1871-133 (10 August 1871), 1.

<sup>23</sup> Mentioned in the colophon of the 1871 Christmas issue. See also: 'Binnenland', *Nieuwe Goessche Courant* VI.87 (10 November 1871), 2.

<sup>24</sup> Van Driel, "'De Hervorming'", 138. Van Driel probably based himself on: 'Jorissen (Eduard Johan Pieter)', in: *BWPGN* IV (The Hague 1931), 591-593. A.G. van Gilse is wrong as well, by claiming that Van Gilse and Mosselmans took the initiative to create *De Hervorming* in 1873. The weekly already existed, albeit under a different name. See: A.G. van Gilse, 'Gilse, Jacob van', in: C. Houtman et al. (eds.), *BLGNP* V (Kampen 2001), 204-205, there 204.

Fully in line with the phase the Dutch modernist movement was going through, the editors of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and other authors of articles demonstrated a firm belief in the ultimate triumph of liberal, non-dogmatic religiosity. Theologians and ministers who already were or would become leading modernist apologists and opinion makers contributed to the magazine. One of them was F. Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846-1919), about whom chapter 7 deals in more detail. In the magazine's issues of 20 and 27 July 1871, he denounced confessionalist objections to a recently published translation of the New Testament, authorised by the Dutch Reformed General Synod.<sup>25</sup> Two of his fellow publicists were the Remonstrant minister B. Tideman Jzn. (1837-1908), who incurred the anger of the Dutch orthodox Jewish community by informing the readers of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* about its supposed 'backwardness' and 'clericalism',<sup>26</sup> and the telegrapher-belletrist A. Admiraal (1833-1878), who poured out vials of wrath upon Kuyper in an 1872 article.<sup>27</sup> Other contributors included the then well-known Reformed ministers J. Hooykaas Herderschee (1822-1886), E.J.W. Koch (1828-1895), W. Muurling and M.A.N. Rovers (1834-1898), as well as modernist-minded lawyer H.Ph. de Kanter (1844-1906). Their articles covered a broad range of topics, including a theological controversy on Dutch Reformed minister P.J.R. Laan (1836-1888); financial misappropriation in some Frisian Dutch Reformed congregations; tendencies of self-glorification within the Dutch Red Cross Committee; educational matters; and the ongoing discussion of administrative matters within the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>28</sup>

One special edition of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* was issued at Christmas in 1871. An unspecified number of copies was given away for free in an attempt to attract new subscribers.<sup>29</sup> In the first article, the pagan origins of the feast of Christmas were brought into the limelight.<sup>30</sup> In the second article, the life of Jesus the Nazarene was the subject of a "zielkundige proeve" ("psychological analysis"), resulting in a total demythologisation of Christianity's name-giver.<sup>31</sup> The third article criticised the custom of celebrating Christmas, as well as Easter and Whitsun, over two public holidays. Since craftsmen and labourers did not get paid on these compulsory free days, they would lose, in the case of the last two aforementioned holidays, one extra day of income, or even two if the 25<sup>th</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup> of December fell on weekdays. The anonymous article writer considered this to be a social abuse: workers, who were already given a mere pittance, could not do without their regular weekly wage. Instead of advocating paid holidays, he argued that Christmas should be celebrated on a Sunday, in order

<sup>25</sup> F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, 'Eene bijbelagatie', *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* 1871-130 (20 July 1871), 1-2; 1878-131 (27 July 1871), 1-2. Already in 1870, an article on the same topic had appeared in the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*. Mentioned in: A.M. Cramer, 'Wie brengt twist en verdeeldheid in het Ned. Bijbelgenootschap, over de nieuwe Bijbelvertaling?', *Geloof en Vrijheid* IV (1870), 579-592, there 579.

<sup>26</sup> C.F.M. Streng, "'Joden-kwesties" in Nederland rond 1870. Humaniteit, moderniteit en Nederlandschap', *Studia Rosenthaliana* XXVIII.2 (1994), 156-176, there 174.

<sup>27</sup> 'Binnenland', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XLV.12903 (15 november 1872), 2.

<sup>28</sup> 'Kerknieuws', *Middelburgsche Courant* 1869-237 (3 December 1869), 1; 'Binnenlandsche berigten', *Goessche Courant* LVII.83 (11 October 1870), 3; 'Amsterdam, 8 November', *De Tijd* 1870-7119 (9 November 1870), 1; 'Binnenland', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XLV.12903 (15 November 1872), 2. A series of articles that H.Ph. de Kanter devoted to Dutch Reformed administrative affairs in the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* in 1872 was reissued in the form of a brochure. See: H.Ph. de Kanter, *Bestuur en beheer* (Groningen [1872]).

<sup>29</sup> W.P. Kops, 'Levensbericht van dr. W.A. Terwogt', in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1909-1910* II (Leiden 1910), 91-114, there 98.

<sup>30</sup> 'Kerstmis en Midwinter', *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* (Christmas Issue 1871) [undated], 1-2.

<sup>31</sup> 'Jezus van Nazareth. Een zielkundige proeve', *Ibid.*, 2-3.

to maintain a six-day working week for artisans. Moreover, he knew for sure, handicraftsmen did simply not know what to do with all this leisure time for which they themselves had not asked.<sup>32</sup>

These three articles caught the eye of freethinker P.A.S. van Limburg Brouwer (1829-1873).<sup>33</sup> In the literary journal *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, he accused modernists of being half-hearted; they rejected the orthodox view of Jesus and simply substituted it for a different image that was just as speculative. Moreover, they were dishonest; the name '*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*' suggested that they tried to uphold church interests, whereas they were actually after the dismantlement of the existing church life. Therefore, Van Limburg Brouwer thought that it would be better to rename the magazine '*Niet-Kerkelijk Weekblad*' ('*Non-Ecclesial Weekly*'). Modernists, he felt, were unbelievers, and should be honest enough to admit that.<sup>34</sup> As chapter 5 shows, other freethinkers flung similar accusations at liberal Protestants.<sup>35</sup>

Orthodox Protestants completely agreed with Van Limburg Brouwer; modernists were nothing more than baptised heathens and hence should accept that they did not belong in any Christian church denomination. Modernists, for their part, blamed confessionals for taking 'outdated' confessions of faith as a criterion to decide who should and should not be accepted as church members.<sup>36</sup> In their weekly, they showed their antagonists the rough side of their tongue and entered into polemics with the editors of orthodox magazines. Consequently, on 19 April 1872, only eighteen days after its founding, the Kuyperian daily *De Standaard* (*The Standard*) could already make mention of "attacks made on us by the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*."<sup>37</sup> Several months later, G.J. Vos Azn. (1836-1912), editor-in-chief of the *Kerkelijk Weekblad*, accused the liberal Protestant weekly of being full of "drivel, lies and ridicule." In response to an article in which an anonymous modernist had mocked the orthodox professor J.I. Doedes (1817-1897) for inferring a causal connection between praying and sunny weather, Vos severely reprimanded editors Mosselmans and Van Gilse: "Behold, what we have here is an example of modernist humaneness, of modernist preachers' respect for holy things on the one hand, and an example of [an orthodox man's] appreciation and veracity on the other hand."<sup>38</sup>

In a footnote to his 1871 lecture *Het Modernisme, een fata morgana op christelijk gebied* (*Modernism, a Fata Morgana in the Christian Sphere*), Kuyper reiterated Van Limburg Brouwer's repudiation. He called to mind a series of articles that had been published shortly before in the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, in which Van Loenen Martinet and Heijse had expressed the hope that modernists would be able to formulate their faith in a less vague way in the near future. Only then would they truly be able to lay the foundations of a stable new religious

<sup>32</sup> 'Drie rustdagen – Ook drie feestdagen?', *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>33</sup> This was not the only instance in which Van Limburg Brouwer targeted modernists. In 1870, for example, he had measured swords with B. Tideman Jzn. in *De Nederlandsche Spectator*, following the latter's publication of the abovementioned article on orthodox Judaism in the Netherlands. See: Streng, "'Joden-kwesties" in Nederland rond 1870', 162-164.

<sup>34</sup> P.A.S. van Limburg Brouwer, 'Een kerkelijk (?) blad', *De Nederlandsche Spectator* 1872-01 (6 January 1872), 2-4.

<sup>35</sup> Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 83.

<sup>36</sup> To name just one example: a certain 'S.' alleged in the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* in April 1872 that "the masses are no longer susceptible to the doctrines of orthodoxy" ("*het volk is over het geheel dood voor de kenmerkende leerstukken der orthodoxie*"). Quoted in: [A. Kuyper], 'Amsterdam, 6 April 1872', *De Standaard* 1.6 (8 April 1872), 1.

<sup>37</sup> "...aanvallen door [...] 't '*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*' tegen ons gericht." Quoted from: [A. Kuyper], 'Amsterdam, 18 April 1872', *Ibid.* 1.16 (19 April 1872), 1.

<sup>38</sup> "...kroegtaal, leugen en spot..."; "Ziedaar dan een staaltje van moderne humaniteit, van eerbied voor het heiligste bij moderne predikanten, van waardering en waarheidsliefde aan de overzijde!" Quoted from: 'Buitenlandsche berichten – Moderne spotternij op de kaak', *Sumatra-courant* XIII.104 (28 December 1872), 3.

community.<sup>39</sup> Kuyper interpreted this to be a covert plea for a modernist confession of faith. The editors of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* had consistently admonished him for advocating a strict enforcement of the Three Forms of Unity in the Dutch Reformed Church, but now, finally, the truth came out: they more or less agreed with him that a church could not do without some form of doctrinal unity, written down in a communally endorsed document. Liberal Protestants, he asserted, were not willing to accept the consequences of their own views on church reform.<sup>40</sup>

In the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, various solutions seem to have been proposed to end the factional quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church. In an article written by jurist H. van Loghem (1808-1881), published in the issue of 21 March 1872 (and afterwards as a separate brochure), modernists were given the advice not to strive for an abrupt demolition of the existing ecclesial structures, which would result in an irrevocable institutional separation of modernists and orthodox Protestants, but rather to let the modernist principles function as a ‘leaven’ within these structures.<sup>41</sup> “This would be,” Van Loghem argued, “consistent with the way Jesus has acted: he did not overthrow the Jewish religion all of a sudden: he just scattered seeds that had to germinate in the hearts of his followers: that way, all outmodedness would inevitably go to ruin.” Van Loghem did not want “a revolution, but a gradual purge.”<sup>42</sup> Modernists should have faith in the invincibility of their own principles; when they would punctiliously practice what they preached and patiently try to persuade other-minded fellow church members with arguments instead of coercive measures, victory would be theirs. In the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* of 25 April 1872, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. took a different view. He thought it would be impossible for modernists and non-modernists to peacefully coexist in one institutional framework. Being convinced that a partition would be the only truly satisfactory solution for both groups to profess their faith as they wished, he is supposed to have said to Dutch Reformed confessionalists in this 1872 article, as Kuyperian minister J.C. Rullmann (1876-1936) recalled, to leave “[our] Church, which, in your eyes, has been consigned to unbelief.”<sup>43</sup> These two diametrically opposing opinions reflected, in broad outline, the stances modernists would take towards church reform in the decades to come, with which chapter 4 deals in more detail.

### 3. *De Hervorming* (I): Its Position within the Dutch Periodical Press

As stated in the introductory chapter, the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* was renamed ‘*De Hervorming*’ in 1873. Mosselmans and Van Gilse, who stayed on as editors-in-chief, felt that even though

<sup>39</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet and J.H.C. Heijse], ‘Mededeelingen en berichten – Binnenland’, *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* 1871-130 (20 July 1871), 2. The series of articles was called ‘*Confessie en confessionalisme*’ (‘*Confession and Confessionalism*’).

<sup>40</sup> A. Kuyper, *Het modernisme, een fata morgana op christelijk gebied* (Amsterdam 1871), 67, note 32.

<sup>41</sup> H. van Loghem, *Nieuwe vormen?* (s.l. [1872]). The front-cover of the brochure erroneously spells the author’s name as ‘H. van Lochem’. The author is Hendrik van Loghem, the former burgomaster of Deventer, as is revealed in: A. van Doorninck, ‘Levensbericht van mr. Hendrik van Loghem’, in: *Handelingen der algemeene vergadering van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, gehouden aldaar den 21<sup>sten</sup> Juni 1883, in het gebouw van de Maatschappij tot Nut van ’t Algemeen III* (Leiden 1883), 161-172.

<sup>42</sup> “De moderne begrippen zullen dan als een zuurdeesem de gemeente kunnen doordringen, tot dat zij geheel zal gedeesemd zijn. Zoo deed immers ook Jezus: hij schafte de Joodsche eeredienst niet ineens af: hij strooide slechts zaden uit, die in de harten zijner volgelingen moesten ontkiemen: en dan zoude van zelf wel vervallen hetgeen met de nieuwe begrippen onbestaanbaar was. [...] Geen revolutie, maar eene langzame zuivering.” Quoted from: Van Loghem, *Nieuwe vormen?*, 7.

<sup>43</sup> “Gaat henen en verlaat een Kerk, die volgens u aan ’t ongelooft is prijsgegeven.” Quoted from: J.C. Rullmann, *De strijd voor kerkherstel in de Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk der XIX<sup>e</sup> eeuw* (Amsterdam 1917), 176.

orthodox Protestants were still giving battle to modernists, the latter had already won the war. After all, modernist ideas had taken root in the bosom of the church and were there to stay. Confessionalism still had to be counterattacked, for the spiritual war not to be needlessly prolonged, but in essence, “*la bataille est finie, faute de combattants*.”<sup>44</sup> The name ‘*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*’ was therefore no longer sufficient for a magazine edited in a modernist spirit. Mosselmans and Van Gilse nonetheless kept it as a subtitle, in order to stress that they continued to cherish the church as a ‘channel’ through which the masses could be “inspired by the holy spirit of dutifulness and fraternal love.”<sup>45</sup> As previously stated, the new name ‘*De Hervorming*’ gave expression to their hope for a ‘new world’: “there are so many Dutch people who share our hope. Let our weekly be the centre of their attempts at reform, the place where they can gain strength.”<sup>46</sup>

Consequently, the coverage of the magazine was slightly broadened, although ecclesial affairs continued to predominate. The section containing letters to the editors gradually increased. The annual subscription rate did not change significantly – from 27 February 1873 onwards, subscribers had to pay twenty cents more<sup>47</sup> –, and neither did the amount of space dedicated to controversies with editors of non-modernist journals. As a matter of fact, the optimism with which Mosselmans and Van Gilse had addressed their readers in the first issue after the magazine’s change of name proved to be completely unwarranted. Contrary to their expectation, modernists’ presence in church life continued to be vehemently challenged.

Next to the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and *De Hervorming*, there were and had been a handful of other periodicals edited in a liberal Protestant spirit. The oldest of these was the aforementioned weekly *De Teeken en des Tijds*. Issued as of October 1858, it took a stance against “dead orthodoxy and its daughter, Pharisaic hypocrisy” as well as against “shallow, vain, worldly liberalism [...] and its two daughters, indifference and mockery.” The weekly was based on the conviction that all church factions “only possessed parts of the [religious] truth or only shed light on this truth from one side.” Consequently, it “did not originate from any faction and was not intended for one particular party.”<sup>48</sup> This proclamation of neutrality could, however, not conceal that the magazine unmistakably propagated ideas and beliefs that soon came to be labelled ‘modernist’. Editor-in-chief Tiele and his fellow article writers, such as Busken Huet, A. Pierson (1831-1896), Kuenen and Rauwenhoff, were dedicated pupils of

<sup>44</sup> “The war is over, which is the assailants’ fault.” Mosselmans and Van Gilse referred to the French saying “*Et le combat cessa faute de combattants*,” a line in the theatre play *Le Cid* (1636), written by dramatist and poet P. Corneille (1606-1684). It is used when a fight or a discussion comes to an end because several participants have been killed or did not manage to persuade or overrule others, as a result of which the battle of arms or battle of words cannot be continued. See: G. Büchmann (W.H. Robert-tornow et al. eds.), *Geflügelte Worte. Der Zitatenschatz des deutschen Volkes* (Berlin 1920), 278.

<sup>45</sup> “*Ons zelve en anderen willen wij door en in de kerk bezielen met den heiligen geest van plichtsbeseft en naastenliefde*.” Quoted from: [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], ‘Nieuwjaarsgroet’, *De Hervorming* 1873-01 (2 January 1873), 1-2, there 1.

<sup>46</sup> “*Daar zijn er zoovelen in ons vaderland die hetzelfde begeeren. Welnu, ons blad zij het middelpunt hunner ondernemingen, het kamp waar de krachten worden geoefend*.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Bericht’, *Ibid.* 1873-09 (27 February 1873), 1.

<sup>48</sup> “...doode orthodoxie, en [...] hare dochter: de farizeesche geveinsdheid [...], ligtzinnige, ijdele, wereldsche liberalisme [...], en dat ook twee dochters heeft die wij verfoeijen: onverschilligheid en spot.”; “Maar, zoo wij ons aan de eene of andere partij niet aansluiten, dan is het [...] omdat we bij geene de waarheid vinden, in al hare zuiverheid en volmaaktheid, omdat we vast overtuigd zijn, dat ieder van haar slechts een deel der waarheid bezit of haar slechts van ééne zijde beschouwt.”; “Ons weekblad, dat niet uitgaat van eenige partij [...], is ook niet voor een bepaalde partij bestemd.” Quoted from: [C.P. Tiele], ‘De redactie aan den lezer’, *De Teeken en des Tijds* I.1 (1 October 1858), 1-2, there 1.



Scholten and Opzoomer, something known at the time.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the topics dealt with in *De Teekenen des Tijds* – ‘liberality’<sup>50</sup>, ‘tolerance’<sup>51</sup> and biblical criticism<sup>52</sup> – all indicated that the weekly was filled with modernist preoccupations. The magazine was slightly ahead of its time; after all, in the late 1850s the modernist movement was just beginning to take shape. It accordingly ceased to exist, due to a lack of interest, in late 1859.<sup>53</sup>

Another modernist periodical, *De Nieuwe Richting in het Leven* (*The New Persuasion in Life*), had been founded in 1868. “People long for a new outlook on religious life that meets today’s needs,” editor-in-chief A.S. Carpentier Alting explained in its first issue. “The modernist movement fulfils this need. It tries to shape religion and Christianity in such a way that they no longer conflict with the results of serious scientific research.”<sup>54</sup> The founders of this magazine were also involved with the creation of the meeting of modernist preachers in the northern provinces.<sup>55</sup> Their main objective was “to explain the modernist principles in plain language to the faithful flock [...], to excite non-dogmatic piety, to jolt awake the indifferent, and to bring wandering souls back on the straight and narrow path.”<sup>56</sup> *De Nieuwe Richting in het Leven* targeted modernists in the province of Friesland and became defunct due to publishing issues at the end of 1871.<sup>57</sup>

Whereas *De Nieuwe Richting in het Leven* published articles written for churchgoers, and *De Teekenen des Tijds* tried to reach out to both theologians and ‘interested laymen’, the modernist-oriented *Theologisch Tijdschrift* (*Theological Magazine*) specifically targeted doctors and professors of theology. This bimonthly, edited by Hoekstra, Kuenen, Rauwenhoff, Tiele, Loman and the Reformed theologian F.W.B. van Bell (1822-1896), was issued as of 1867 to offer Dutch modernist theologians the possibility of sharing scholarly findings and thoughts with their peers.<sup>58</sup> All contributions had to be based on research conducted by the authors themselves.<sup>59</sup> The magazine, issued until 1919, did not want to popularise modernist opinions and only discussed affairs related to the professional guild of theologians. From 1862 onwards, Remonstrant minister J.H. Maronier (1827-1920) had published a periodical that targeted both modern theologians and the modernist-minded bourgeoisie. In his *Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie* – to be renamed ‘*Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie en Letterkunde*’ (*Library of Modern Theology and*

<sup>49</sup> Busken Huet, for example, had already published his *Brieven over den Bijbel*. In addition, it was, at the time, “generally known that Tiele has rejected the divinity of Christ.” (“*Het is bekend, dat de heer Tiele de goddelijkheid van Christus verworpen heeft.*”) See: Een zoekende naar waarheid, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Dageraad* VIII (1859), 472-473, there 472.

<sup>50</sup> J.H. Maronier, ‘Willem de Zwijger, een voorbeeld van echte liberaliteit’, *De Teekenen des Tijds* I.52 (23 September 1859), 2.

<sup>51</sup> J.H. Gunning, Jr., ‘Opmerkingen over verdraagzaamheid’, *Ibid.* I.27 (1 April 1859), 1-2.

<sup>52</sup> Tiele’s series of articles on Busken Huet’s *Brieven over den Bijbel*, referred to in the introductory chapter.

<sup>53</sup> [C.P. Tiele], ‘Overzicht’, *Ibid.* I.52 (23 September 1859), 1.

<sup>54</sup> “*Men verlangde naar een opvatting van het godsdienstig leven die beantwoorden zou aan de behoeften van den tijd. En de moderne richting heeft die roeping. Hare leuze is het: een opvatting van godsdienst en Christendom te geven die niet langer in strijd is met de resultaten van ernstig wetenschappelijk onderzoek.*” Quoted from: A.S. Carpentier Alting, ‘Aan onze lezers bij ’t begin van den tweeden jaargang’, *De Nieuwe Richting in het Leven* II (1869), 1-4, there 4.

<sup>55</sup> J.J. Kalma, J.J. Spahr van der Hoek and K. de Vries, *Geschiedenis van Friesland* (Drachten 1968), 552.

<sup>56</sup> “[Een periodiek] waarin onze gemeenteleden de nieuwe denkbeelden eens helder en klaar [zouden] worden uiteengezet. [De redactie poogde] vrije vroomheid te wekken, de onverschilligen wakker te schudden, de afgedwaalden terug te roepen.” Quoted from: A.S. Carpentier Alting, *Mnemosyne* (Leiden 1888), 76.

<sup>57</sup> Busé, ‘Het modernisme in Friesland omstreeks 1870’, 87.

<sup>58</sup> De Vries is wrong to claim that J.H. Scholten was one of the editors of the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*. See: S.J. de Vries, *Bible and Theology in The Netherlands* (New York etc. 1989), 43.

<sup>59</sup> As was made clear in: ‘Varia’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* I (1867), 281.

*Literature*’) in 1869<sup>60</sup> –, Maronier anthologised theological treatises and literary texts of mostly non-Dutch authors.<sup>61</sup> After Maronier resigned his position as editor-in-chief in July 1880, M.A.N. Rovers, who was no longer a Dutch Reformed minister at the time, would continue to publish the *Bibliotheek* until 1893. Due to, as Rovers perceived, a dwindling interest in theology among laypeople, the *Bibliotheek* had only managed to reach theologians in the last couple of years, causing its readership to become similar to that of the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*. As such, it had lost its reason to exist.<sup>62</sup>

A magazine with a similar focus on modernist theology, the first one of its kind in the Netherlands, had been the French-language periodical *La Seule Chose Nécessaire* (*The Only Necessary Thing*). Edited by Busken Huet and filled with articles written by other renowned Francophone theologians such as E.H.A. Schérer (1815-1889), A.J. Coquerel, Jr. (1820-1875) and T. Colani (1824-1888), this “monthly for Christian edification,” issued as of April 1857, had wanted to be a foil to the “Gospel’s scriptural, pristine and ageless character.”<sup>63</sup> According to Busken Huet and his colleagues, the spirit of confessionalism that was still actively present in the churches had led, on the rebound, to “religious indifference.” This indifference had had, in turn, the consequence that “the Gospel was misunderstood, ignored, pushed aside into a corner, [only] respected as an artefact of bygone times.”<sup>64</sup> The present day resembled those of the Israelites during the apostolic era: ‘a beneficial reversal’ was beginning to break through. Instead of contenting themselves with a veiled version of the Truth, people yearned for the ‘undefiled’ Glad Tidings of Jesus. Speaking about the results of contemporary biblical criticism in guarded terms, Busken Huet stated that non-theologians should not be kept in the dark about these results: “in our days, it is, more than ever, necessary to be honest.”<sup>65</sup> He showed an openness about his own religious convictions as well, by informing his readers what the name ‘Jesus Christ’ meant to him. Using typically modernist phraseology, he declared that, in his view, “the name ‘Jesus Christ’ is the proper name for our better selves.”<sup>66</sup> Because it was written in French,

<sup>60</sup> ‘Varia’, *Ibid.* III (1869), 674.

<sup>61</sup> J.H. Maronier, ‘Voorberigt’, *Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie* I (1862), I-II. See also: ‘Advertentiën’, *De Nederlandsche Spectator* 1862-06 (8 February 1862), 48.

<sup>62</sup> M.A.N. Rovers, ‘Leestafel’, *Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie en Letterkunde* XIII<sup>(second series)</sup> (1893), 641-650, there 649-650; J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Levensbericht van dr. M.A.N. Rovers’, in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1901-1902* III (Leiden 1902), 235-257, there 250-251.

<sup>63</sup> “...recueil mensuel d’édification chrétienne...”; “Le côté de l’Evangile que nous venons de relever, en est le côté scripturaire, primitif, éternel.” Quoted from: C. Busken Huet, ‘À nos lecteurs’, *La Seule Chose Nécessaire. Recueil mensuel d’édification chrétienne* I (1856), 1-4, there 2.

<sup>64</sup> “Sous la pression de l’indifférence religieuse nourrie par les antipathies confessionnelles, l’Evangile reste incompris, méconnu, relégué dans un coin, à peine respecté comme souvenir.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 2-3.

<sup>65</sup> “De nos jours, plus que jamais, les positions franches sont de rigueur.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>66</sup> “Jésus-Christ est pour nous comme le nom-propre de notre meilleur nous-mêmes.” Quoted from: C. Busken Huet, ‘À nos lecteurs’, *La Seule Chose Nécessaire. Recueil de méditations chrétiennes* (1857), 1-4, there 3. This is a different publication than *La seule chose nécessaire. Recueil mensuel d’édification chrétienne* – in fact, *La seule chose nécessaire. Recueil de méditations chrétiennes* was a reprint of the first four issues of *La Seule Chose Nécessaire. Recueil mensuel d’édification chrétienne*, supplemented with a new preface by Busken Huet. See also: C.G.N. de Vooy, *Conrad Busken Huet* (The Hague and Antwerp 1949), 21. Whereas De Vooy accentuates the progressiveness of Busken Huet and his magazine, Trapman emphasises that *La Seule Chose Nécessaire* also contained rather orthodox statements. He cites a sentence in which one of Busken Huet’s colleagues accepts the resurrection of Jesus as a fact that does not need to be scientifically proven: “Je ne m’arrêterai pas à prouver la résurrection de Jésus-Christ. Il doit m’être permis de supposer que je m’adresse à des lecteurs chrétiens, et non à des incrédules qui nient ce fait, l’un des plus certains de l’histoire en dehors même du témoignage des apôtres.” (“I will not dwell

*La Seule Chose Nécessaire* only circulated among members of the Walloon Reformed churches and Dutchmen who were able to read French<sup>67</sup> – two partly overlapping groups that both belonged, on the whole, to the higher strata of Dutch society.<sup>68</sup> Its potential reading public was therefore limited, which will probably have been the reason why the publication of the magazine had to be cancelled in March 1858. However, Busken Huet targeted a much larger audience. As stated by A.C. Kruseman in his study on the mid-nineteenth-century Dutch book business, Busken Huet had initially hoped that *La Seule Chose Nécessaire* would grow out to become the pivotal journalistic platform of modernism in entire Europe. “Obviously,” Kruseman commented, “this quixotic endeavour” was doomed to fail from the start.<sup>69</sup>

Even though the articles it contained were rather learned, O.J. Praamstra lists *La Seule Chose Nécessaire* among the so-called ‘edifying journals’.<sup>70</sup> This magazine genre consisted of periodicals that, contrary to opinion magazines and academical-theological journals, tried to reach members of the lower and lower middle classes, in an attempt to increase their devotion as well as their knowledge of the Bible. Such periodicals mainly consisted of biblical and non-biblical parables, (semi-)fictionalised stories with an obvious didactic intent and religious moral, and meditations written in a popular, easily accessible style. The first edifying magazines of a markedly modernist persuasion appeared in the 1860s. The oldest of these was *De Bijbelvriend* (*The Bible’s Friend*), which had been created in 1856 and was edited by Reformed minister A.L. Poelman (1827-1893). Together with the *Godsdienstig Huisblad* (*Religious Household Magazine*), which was founded in the same year and was meant for “everyone who was interested in acquiring a proper understanding of the Bible, and who wanted to increase and enlighten his knowledge as a Christian by taking cognizance of the history of the Christian church,”<sup>71</sup> this monthly had originally been rooted in the Groningen movement. However, *De Bijbelvriend* had soon developed into a medium through which modernist ideas were spread. After publicly declaring to be a modernist, Poelman, who was assisted by U.P. Okken (1820-1900) from 1857 until 1859,<sup>72</sup> and afterwards by J. Hooykaas Herderscheê, used *De Bijbelvriend* to popularise a historical-critical interpretation of the Old and New Testament stories.<sup>73</sup> All non-modernists who were involved

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upon the veracity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ at great length. Please allow me to presume that I am addressing a Christian readership instead of unbelievers who deny this fact, one of the most unquestionable [facts] in history, [the truth of which does not depend on] the apostles’ testimony.”) Quoted from: Ch. Dardier, ‘La résurrection de Christ, garantie de celle des chrétiens’, *La Seule Chose Nécessaire* (1857), 176-194, there 178, mentioned in: J. Trapman, *Het land van Erasmus* (Amsterdam 1999), 175.

<sup>67</sup> C.G.N. de Vooy, *Geschiedenis van de letterkunde der Nederlanden VII* (’s-Hertogenbosch and Brussels 1948), 277.

<sup>68</sup> E.g.: B.M.A. de Vries, *Electoraat en elite. Sociale structuur en sociale mobiliteit in Amsterdam, 1850-1895* (Amsterdam 1986), 54.

<sup>69</sup> “Natuurlijk, die don-quichot-achtige onderneming van den uitgever mislukte.” Quoted from: A.C. Kruseman, *Bouwstoffen voor een geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen boekhandel, gedurende de halve eeuw 1830-1880 I.2* (Amsterdam 1887), 407.

<sup>70</sup> O.J. Praamstra, ‘Stichtelijke lectuur. Een analyse van het vroege kritische werk van Conrad Busken Huet (1855-1859)’, *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde CII* (1986), 21-54, there 23, note 12.

<sup>71</sup> “Ieder die eenig belang stelt in het regt verstand van den Bijbel, en door de geschiedenis der Christelijke Kerk zijne kennis als Christen wenscht te vermeederen en te verhelderen.” Quoted from: ‘Advertentiën’, *Groninger Courant* CXIV.157 (28 December 1855), 4.

<sup>72</sup> The second volume of the *Bibliografie van Nederlandse Protestantse Periodieken* erroneously states that U.P. Okken was editor of *De Bijbelvriend* from 1857 until 1866. See: ‘De Bijbelvriend’, in: G. Harinck et al. (eds.), *BNPP II* (Amstelveen 2006), 47.

<sup>73</sup> Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 62-63. Buitenwerf-van der Molen and Bos are wrong to imply that *De Bijbelvriend* had been a modernist periodical from the very beginning. See: *Ibid.*; D.J. Bos, “‘When Creed and Morals Rot...’ Orthodoxies versus Liberalism in the Nineteenth-Century Netherlands Reformed Church”, in: B.E.J.H.

with the magazine, for example Groningen theologians Hofstede de Groot and U.P. Goudschaal (1809-1889), withdrew as contributors and were replaced by such pronounced modernists as T. Modderman Az. (1818-1879) and Kuenen.<sup>74</sup> The subtitle ‘*Nieuw en Oud*’ (‘*New and Old*’) became the new name of the magazine in 1866<sup>75</sup> – a name change with which Poelman and Hooykaas Herderscheê indicated that it would no longer exclusively deal with biblical exegesis, but also with questions regarding “the relation of the modernist principles towards education, missionary activities, politics, science, art and society.”<sup>76</sup> The topics mentioned here resembled the themes to which the articles in *De Hervorming* would pay attention to a large extent.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Dutch modernism, and Dutch Protestantism in general, produced a substantial amount of edifying periodicals.<sup>77</sup> It was no coincidence that this “torrent,” as one contemporary observer phrased it, took place at this specific moment in time.<sup>78</sup> Of course, in the Netherlands, the abolition of the newspaper tax in 1869 was a major stimulus for the founding of all kinds of dailies, weeklies, fortnightlies, (bi)monthlies and quarterlies. In the case of *edifying* journals, there were some additional factors involved as well. In the first place, the growth in edifying literature could be seen as the result of a general trend in nineteenth-century church life. During the entire nineteenth century, attempts were made to increase the involvement of the laity in religious affairs and to intensify the zeal of their faith.<sup>79</sup> In the second place, edifying magazines were, particularly in the context of the fragmented Dutch church landscape, a means to involve non-theologically trained laymen in theological questions of the day and to spread certain theological concepts among them. In order to make these ideas comprehensible for as large a public as possible, edifying magazines couched them in the form of stories.<sup>80</sup> The emergence of the modernist movement stimulated the founding of such journals.<sup>81</sup>

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Becking (ed.), *Orthodoxy, Liberalism, and Adaptation. Essays on Ways of Worldmaking in Times of Change from Biblical, Historical and Systematic Perspectives* (Leiden and Boston 2011), 115-147, there 136.

<sup>74</sup> ‘De Bijbelvriend’, 47.

<sup>75</sup> The magazine was called ‘*De Bijbelvriend. Maandelijksch tijdschrift tot bevordering van regte bijbelkennis*’ (‘*The Friend of the Bible. Monthly for the Advancement of Proper Biblical Knowledge*’) between 1856 and 1859, and ‘*De Bijbelvriend. Nieuw en oud, ter verklaring van den inhoud en den geest des Bijbels*’ (‘*The Friend of the Bible. New and Old, in Explanation of the Bible’s Content and Spirit*’) between 1860 and 1866. See: X., ‘Godgeleerdheid, Wijsbegeerte, Staatskunde, Opvoeding en Onderwijs – Hand. XVII:11’, *De Tijdspiegel* XVII.2 (1860), 19-20, there 20; ‘De Bijbelvriend’, 47.

<sup>76</sup> “...de verhouding der moderne beginselen tot het onderwijs, de zendingszaak, de staatkunde, de wetenschap, de kunst, het maatschappelijk leven.” Quoted from: R-t., ‘Bibliographisch album – “De Bijbelvriend” en “Nieuw en Oud”’, *Het Leeskabinet* XXXIV (1867), 41-42, there 41.

<sup>77</sup> Kruseman lists the aforementioned magazine *De Nieuwe Richting in het Leven* among the ‘edifying periodicals’. See: Kruseman, *Bouwstoffen voor een geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen boekhandel* II.1, 24. The editors of this magazine did, however, have the intention to raise public opinion in a modernist sense.

<sup>78</sup> “...stortvloed...” Quoted from: J.F., Jr., ‘Boekbeoordeelingen, boekbeschouwingen, boek aankondigingen – “De Bijbelvriend”’, *De Nieuwe Recensent* I (1858), 177-178, there 177. Other observers used the more neutral word “overvloed” (“abundance”). See: ‘Boek aankondiging – “Godsdienstige overdenkingen”’, *Waarheid in Liefde* XXXI.3 (1868), 510; P., ‘Bibliographisch album – “Vrouwelijke godsvrucht”’, *Het Leeskabinet* XXII (1855), 116-117, there 117.

<sup>79</sup> In the Dutch context, the enfranchisement of all male members of the Dutch Reformed in 1867 probably is one of the clearest examples of these attempts.

<sup>80</sup> Literary studies scholar M. McCartin Wearn suggests a correlation between the growth in edifying literature in the nineteenth century and the simultaneous ‘feminisation of religion’. The latter is a label given in historiography to the emergence of a new kind of ‘sentimental’ piety, as well as to the emerging numerical preponderance of women over men in church life. In the Netherlands, there were edifying magazines that specifically targeted women, but modernist magazines were not among them. See: M. McCartin Wearn, ‘Introduction’, in: M. McCartin Wearn (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century American Women Write Religion. Lived Theologies and Literature* (London and New York [2014] 2016), 1-14, there 9; L.E. Jensen, “*Bij uitsluiting voor de vrouwelijke sekse geschikt*”. *Vrouwentijdschriften en journalistes in Nederland in de achttiende en negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum 2001), 141-142, 161-174.

Moreover, edifying magazines were apologetic in nature. They tried to impress their readership with the message that a good, righteous citizen had to be, first and foremost, a virtuous Christian. By publishing such periodicals, modernists belied the allegation that their popularisation of historical-critical biblical scholarship was faith-destructing instead of faith-enhancing. In their eyes, it was exactly the other way round. *De Bijbelvriend*, *Nieuw en Oud* and other modernist edifying journals as *Geloof en Leven* (*Faith and Life*), a monthly founded in 1867 and filled with “contributions for the promotion of religious popular education,”<sup>82</sup> *Taal des Geloofs* (*Language of Faith*), which appeared on a monthly basis as of 1867 to publish ‘religious lectures’ held by modernist ministers,<sup>83</sup> and the *Godsdienstig Album* (*Religious Album*), a monthly created in 1871 to anthologise Dutch and foreign edifying literature<sup>84</sup>, were consequently not intended to deprive people of their faith, but on the contrary to strengthen the defensibility of their faith. Van der Wall is thus absolutely right in claiming, as a colleague paraphrased her, “[that their] motif was apologetic in character, as has been widely neglected in studies and views on this movement.”<sup>85</sup> Modernists feared that Christianity would not be strong enough to bear the challenges imposed upon it by modern science, modern philosophy and modern textual criticism. Since the Christian religion on the one hand and civilisation, decency and morality on the other were generally seen as two sides of the same coin, this was an alarming prospect, even for more ‘enlightened’ nineteenth-century men. To turn the tide, the Christian faith had to be adapted to contemporary circumstances.<sup>86</sup> Modernists were therefore convinced that *true* edification could only be based on modernist principles.<sup>87</sup> In line with this, edifying magazines were ‘tools’ by which they could show laymen how the essence of Christianity could be preserved and how the outcomes of modern scholarship could be accepted at the same time.

Popular education was also the objective to which the *Volksblad* (*People’s Magazine*), first issued in 1856, devoted itself.<sup>88</sup> Its editor-in-chief, conservative-liberal Lutheran parliamentarian J. de Bosch Kemper (1808-1876), primarily used the *Volksblad* to vent his gall on then-leading liberal statesman J.R. Thorbecke (1798-1872), who, in his eyes, threw away the principles of true liberalism by pleading for a strong central government at the expense of municipal authorities.<sup>89</sup> Under the heading ‘*Tijdvragen*’ (‘Questions of the Day’), he wrote short essays on political and societal issues. As of 1869, several of these treatises were published as articles in a new journal, the title of which was the same as this heading.<sup>90</sup> Although the *Volksblad* and the *Tijdvragen* were

<sup>81</sup> Praamstra, ‘Stichtelijke leetuur’, 31-34; Kruseman, *Bouwstoffen voor een geschiedenis van den Nederlandschen boekhandel* I.1, 205-206.

<sup>82</sup> “...bijdragen tot bevordering van godsdienstige volksontwikkeling...” See: [J. van der Ven and H. Vrendenberg Cz.], ‘Geloof en Leven’, *Geloof en Leven* I.1 (1867), 1-5; W.C. van Manen, *Het Nieuwe Testament sedert 1859* (Groningen 1886), 7.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Varia’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* I (1867), 632. Its first issue was: T. Modderman Az., ‘De blijdschap des geloofs’, *Taal des Geloofs* 1 (1867), 3-18.

<sup>84</sup> ‘Advertentiën’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1870-238 (20 December 1870), 4.

<sup>85</sup> B.E.J.H. Becking, ‘Introduction – Why This Volume’, in: Becking (ed.), *Orthodoxy, Liberalism, and Adaptation*, 3-7, there 5.

<sup>86</sup> E.G.E. van der Wall, ‘Believing, Belonging, and Adapting. The Case of Religious Modernism’, in: *Ibid.*, 91-114, there 106-109.

<sup>87</sup> C. Busken Huet, *Stichtelijke leetuur* (Haarlem 1859), 283.

<sup>88</sup> T.J. Boschloo, *De productiemaatschappij. Liberalisme, economische wetenschap en het vraagstuk der armoede in Nederland, 1800-1875* (Hilversum 1989), 97.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 93, 97.

<sup>90</sup> The first issue appeared in July-August 1869. Mentioned in: *Lijst van Boekwerken 1869-11* (November 1869), 109.

no religious publications in the strict sense of the word, and not directly linked to the modernist movement, De Bosch Kemper himself ranked them among the magazines that sympathised with this movement.<sup>91</sup> From 1859 onwards, when the *Volksblad*'s coverage had been broadened to the field of religion, it had been the only Dutch weekly that "interestedly followed the new religious movement and quickly espoused its principle of Truth-loving [biblical and religious] criticism."<sup>92</sup> Because, in the meantime, other magazines edited in a modernist spirit had appeared, one of the main reasons for De Bosch Kemper to publish the *Volksblad* and the *Tijdvragen* no longer existed. He therefore decided to discontinue the issuing of both periodicals in 1872.<sup>93</sup>

Before informing his readership about his decision,<sup>94</sup> De Bosch Kemper must have given J.H. Maronier a hint. After all, during the first general assembly of the NPB, Maronier suggested the possibility of buying the *Volksblad* from De Bosch Kemper and turning it into the official newsletter of the NPB. The printed report of the meeting does not make mention of Maronier's proposal, but several dailies did.<sup>95</sup> The general assembly rejected the suggestion. Only three days later, on 3 November 1871, De Bosch Kemper publicly stated to cease publication of his magazines as of 1872, which conveys the impression that he had awaited the response of the general NPB assembly to Maronier's proposal.

After 1871, the want of an NPB-related magazine increased. In May 1874, during a meeting of the executive board of the NPB, secretary A.G. van Hamel addressed the issue. He envisioned a journal that should be issued once every two weeks, in imitation of the Swiss modernist fortnightly *Die Reform (The Reformation)*, founded in 1872.<sup>96</sup> Its first article, in which editor-in-chief H. Lang (1826-1876) gave notice of his intentions, strongly resembled the declaration of intent, quoted in the introductory chapter, that would be published in the opening issue of *De Hervorming* a year later. In order to preserve the church as the disseminator of true religion, Lang insisted that the existing church domain had to be delivered from the "united reactionary alliance [of] ultramontane Catholicism and Bible-believing Reformed orthodoxy," and that it should be reformed in accordance with the "advancing powers of progress. [...] Everything that a modern, reasonable man can no longer believe, sign or pray, should be eradicated from the church, from preaching to hymnal signing to praying!"<sup>97</sup>

<sup>91</sup> See also: A. Réville, 'Dutch Theology. Its Past and Present State', *The Theological Review* I.3 (1864), 255-293, there 291.

<sup>92</sup> "...in 1859 was het *Volksblad* het eenige weekblad, dat met belangstelling de nieuwe richting op godsdienstig gebied gadesloeg en weldra voor haar beginsel van waarheidlievende kritiek gewonnen werd." Quoted from: J. de Bosch Kemper, 'Aan de lezers en medewerkers van de "Tijdvragen"', *Tijdvragen* III (1872), I-VI, there II. [The articles were written in 1871, but the volume itself was published a year later.]

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, III.

<sup>94</sup> The article 'Aan de lezers en medewerkers van de "Tijdvragen"' was dated '3 November 1871'.

<sup>95</sup> E.g.: 'Berichten in de laatste editie van het vorig nommer opgenomen', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XLIV-12532 (3 November 1871), 3; 'Kerk- en schoolnieuws', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1871-507 (3 November 1871), 2; 'Binnenland', *Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant* XLVIII.259 (3 November 1871), 2.

<sup>96</sup> Van Driel, "'De Hervorming'", 136. This opinion magazine was as a merger of the *Zeitstimmen aus der reformierten Kirche der Schweiz* (*Contemporary Voices from the Swiss Reformed Church*) and the *Reformblätter aus der bernischen Kirche* (*Reformation Papers from the Church in the Canton of Bern*). Th.K. Kuhn, 'Theologischer Transfer. Die Baur-Schule und die schweizerische Theologie im 19. Jahrhundert', *Blätter für württembergische Kirchengeschichte* CV (2005), 51-64, there 47.

<sup>97</sup> "...vereinte reaktionäre Front [...] katholischen Ultramontanismus und bibelgläubig-reformierte Orthodoxie"; "...vorwärtsdrängenden Kräften des Fortschritts [...]. Entfernet aus der Kirche, aus Predigt, Gesang und Gebet alles, was ein denkender Mensch unserer Zeit nicht mehr glauben, singen, beten kann!" Quoted in: A. Lindt, *Protestanten –*

Since Mosselmans and Van Gilse had a similar objective with *De Hervorming* as Lang had with *Die Reform*, Van Hamel made the suggestion to purchase *De Hervorming*. His fellow board members fell in with that idea, yet Mosselmans and Van Gilse were less enthusiastic: when Van Hamel's proposal came to be discussed at the 1874 NPB meeting, the latter stated to fear involvement of the board with their editorial policy.<sup>98</sup> Nonetheless, negotiations with E.J.P. Jorissen (1829-1912), the owner of the Erven B. van der Kamp publishing house, about a purchase of *De Hervorming* continued. Although not credited as one of the editors of the magazine, Jorissen in fact fulfilled the same role as Mosselmans, whose editorship ended at the end of 1874, and Van Gilse.<sup>99</sup> The negotiations he had with the NPB board did not go well, even reaching a deadlock in the course of 1875.

Yet all of a sudden, Jorissen proved to be very eager to sell *De Hervorming* in September that same year. Shortly before, Th.F. Burgers (1834-1881), the then president of the Transvaal Republic who shared Jorissen's liberal Protestant world view, had asked him to accept a position as a classical language teacher at a grammar school in Pretoria. Jorissen wanted to comply and therefore had to sell the Groningen publishing house at short notice. He made the NPB board the offer to buy the name and format of *De Hervorming* for f 1,000.-, with effect from 11 November 1875. The board had to make a decision before 1 October, when the publishing house would pass into the hands of its new owners.<sup>100</sup> It could not formally take a decision such as this one without being given full discretionary powers by the general NPB assembly, but the assembly would only convene at the end of October. The board members thought that the assembly would approve Jorissen's offer anyway and hence decided to accept it. Their calculation proved to be right: the general assembly did indeed sanction the deal.<sup>101</sup> However, had the general assembly known about it *in advance*, it would have more than likely declined the offer.<sup>102</sup> Several attendants of the assembly were shown to be anything but pleased with the "*fait accompli*" with which they were presented.<sup>103</sup>

As a result of the purchase, the issue of *De Hervorming* of 11 November 1875 was the first to carry the subtitle '*Orgaan van het Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*' ('Mouthpiece of the Dutch League of Protestants') and the first to be edited by Lutheran minister H.C. Lohr. As of January 1876, Van Hengel & Eeltjes in Rotterdam became the new publishing house of the magazine.<sup>104</sup> Simultaneously, the annual subscription rate was lowered from f 4.80 to f 4.26<sup>105</sup>, more than likely in an attempt to stimulate as many NPB members as possible to take a subscription.

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*Katholiken: Kulturkampf. Studien zur Kirchen- und Geistesgeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Zürich [1963]), 141.

<sup>98</sup> [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse in:] *Verslag NPB 1875*, 23.

<sup>99</sup> Mosselmans's articles were deemed 'too insensitive'. See: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Een woord vooraf', *De Hervorming* 1876-45 (9 November 1876), 1-2, there 1; J. van Gilse, 'Afscheidswoord', *Ibid.* 1875-44 (4 November 1875), 1.

<sup>100</sup> H. van der Laan, *Het Groninger boekbedrijf. Drukkers, uitgevers en boekhandelaren in Groningen tot het eind van de negentiende eeuw* (Assen 2005), 195.

<sup>101</sup> *Verslag NPB 1875*, 23.

<sup>102</sup> Van Driel, "'De Hervorming'", 139.

<sup>103</sup> Quoted from: *Verslag NPB 1875*, 21-23. Jorissen would never become a teacher in Pretoria; instead, he was appointed as the state solicitor of the Transvaal Republic in 1876. See: 'Jorissen (Eduard Johan Pieter)', 592. See also: H.J. van Rinsum, *Sol iustitiae en de Kaap. Een geschiedenis van de banden van de Utrechtse Universiteit met Zuid-Afrika* (Hilversum 2006), 83-84.

<sup>104</sup> Van Driel is wrong to state that Lohr became editor-in-chief only in 1876. See: Van Driel, "'De Hervorming'", 139. As was the case when Mosselmans and Van Gilse had become the editors of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*, the magazine's publishing house and editorial board were now again located in the same city: both Lohr and Van Hengel & Eeltjes resided in Rotterdam. Van der Laan is wrong to suggest that the Erven B. van der Kamp would continue to

#### 4. *De Hervorming* (II): From 1875 to 1934

The first year of *De Hervorming* under the flag of the NPB proved to be a difficult one. First, the general NPB board soon felt that it had bought a pig in a poke. It thought it had purchased a magazine with approximately 500 subscribers, but it turned out that only 338 people had a subscription to *De Hervorming*. After a lengthy correspondence, Jorissen, now living in South Africa, ultimately agreed that the board only had to pay f 676.- instead of f 1,000.-.<sup>106</sup> The fact that the number of subscribers was significantly lower than expected will have probably been the reason why the annual subscription fee was raised to f 4.46 as of 27 April 1876.<sup>107</sup> Second, the board members of the NPB were not pleased with Lohr as editor-in-chief. In his first leading article, Lohr stated that he wanted to pursue the editorial policy of his predecessors: counterattacking confessionism on the one hand and materialism, the denial of religious life, on the other; legitimising the presence of modernists in church life, especially in the Dutch Reformed Church; discussing how the antagonism between modernists and orthodox could best be resolved; and trying to foster a spirit of cooperation among liberal Protestants.<sup>108</sup> However, he fell short of expectations. In the eyes of the board members, Lohr did not engage himself enough in polemics with modernists' fiercest opponents. H.C.J. Krijthe (1825-1902), an NPB member with freethinking sympathies, was critical as well, albeit for the opposite reason. According to him, *De Hervorming* was still preoccupied with the demolition of the old, dogmatic orthodox Christian outlook on life. The magazine did not positively contribute to the build-up of a genuinely *new* kind of Christianity, as it wasted too many words on orthodox antagonism and contained too many articles on theological matters that were hard to grasp for laymen.<sup>109</sup> During the 1876 general NPB assembly, Krijthe therefore suggested to turn *De Hervorming* into a "popular magazine."<sup>110</sup> He met with a rebuff, although his criticism, together with that of the board, did drive Lohr to resign shortly after the assembly. As of 9 November 1876, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. (1839-1900), at the time Dutch Reformed minister in the North Holland town of Santpoort, succeeded Lohr.

In the first two issues after Lohr's resignation, Hugenholtz promised to make more counterattacks against anti-modernist journalists than Lohr had done and asked NPB branches to send in more news reports than they had done so far. Although the aforementioned *Vereeniging tot handhaving en voortplanting van het liberale beginsel* in Amsterdam issued a weekly called 'De Vrijheid' ('Freedom') since 1873, *De Hervorming* still was the only modernist opinion magazine with both a national focus and a national circulation. Hugenholtz therefore agreed with Krijthe that the magazine should be written in such a way that it would attract as large a readership as possible.<sup>111</sup> Judging by the number of subscribers, Hugenholtz' editorship was successful: in a period of only twelve months, the amount of subscriptions increased from nearly 350 to

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publish *De Hervorming* until the magazine became defunct at the end of 1934. See: Van der Laan, *Het Groninger boekbedrijf*, 118.

<sup>105</sup> *De Hervorming* 1876-01 (6 January 1876). During the 1875 general assembly, the NPB executive board had proposed a rate of f 4.-. See: *Verslag AV 1875*, 21. Publishing house Van Hengel & Eeltjes was apparently not able to issue *De Hervorming* for a fee as low as that.

<sup>106</sup> Van Driel, "'De Hervorming'", 139.

<sup>107</sup> *De Hervorming* 1876-17 (27 April 1876).

<sup>108</sup> [H.C. Lohr], 'Een woord vooraf', *Ibid.* 1875-45 (11 November 1875), 1-2.

<sup>109</sup> [H.C.J. Krijthe in:] F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Nog iets over ons blad', *Ibid.* 1876-46 (16 November 1876), 1.

<sup>110</sup> "...volksblad..." Quoted from: [H.C.J. Krijthe in:] *Verslag NPB 1876*, 27.

<sup>111</sup> F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Een woord vooraf', *De Hervorming* 1876-45 (9 November 1876), 1-2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Nog iets over ons blad', *Ibid.* 1876-46 (16 November 1876), 1.



approximately 600.<sup>112</sup> Yet Hugenholtz himself was not entirely satisfied. In spite of his intention, most articles were still devoted to administrative church affairs.<sup>113</sup> He was trying to free *De Hervorming* of its image of being a periodical that was merely of interest to ministers and theologians<sup>114</sup>, but the ongoing quarrels within the Dutch Reformed Church, which were quite severe in the late 1870s, hindered him from effectively doing so.<sup>115</sup>

As of January 1877, J.F.V. Behrns in Amsterdam was the new publisher of *De Hervorming*. Once again, the instalment of a new editor-in-chief, in this case Hugenholtz, led to a switch to a publishing house in the vicinity of the new editor-in-chief's domicile. The subscription rate was simultaneously raised to the old sum of f4.80.<sup>116</sup> In addition, the weekly was no longer issued on Thursday, but on Friday evenings. Issues of the magazine were, however, given the date of the Saturday following the Friday on which they were published. This was not exceptional: the Kuyperian weekly *De Heraut*, for instance, was issued on Fridays, but bore the date of the next Sunday.

In February 1878, a new modernist magazine entered the scene: the *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* (*Voices from the Free Congregation*), issued by the *Vrije Gemeente* (Free Congregation) in Amsterdam.<sup>117</sup> Chapter 4 deals with the Free Congregation at large. F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., a half-brother of the two founders of this nondenominational modernist community of faith, regularly published reviews of issues of the *Stemmen* in *De Hervorming* and sympathised with its editors' ecclesial ideal of free congregations cut loose from any denominational structure.<sup>118</sup>

After a couple of years, the content of *De Hervorming* started to change. From 1880 onwards, Hugenholtz began to devote more and more attention to non-ecclesial affairs and topics. One important event that must have influenced this was the decision of the Dutch Reformed synod to stipulate that new church members only had to agree with church doctrines "in spirit and substance."<sup>119</sup> Although this could be seen as a confirmation of doctrinal freedom, modernists had rather hoped that the synod would allow ministers to ask questions in accordance with their own theological views, or else to ask no questions at all. After all, even after the effecting of the "in spirit and substance" clause in 1880, modernist clergyman still had to refer to the dogmatic documents on which the Dutch Reformed Church was formally based.<sup>120</sup> Moreover, a pragmatic settlement that could have ended the antagonism between modernists and non-modernists was

<sup>112</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Zevende gewone algemeene vergadering van het Ned. Protestantenbond', *Ibid.* 1877-44 (3 November 1877), 3.

<sup>113</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Iets over ons blad en de behoeften waaraan het te voldoen heeft', *Ibid.* 1878-02 (12 January 1878), 1.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De achtste gewone algemeene vergadering van het Nederlandsch Protestantenbond', *Ibid.* 1878-44 (2 November 1878), 2-3, there 3; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Rectificatie', *Ibid.* 1881-01 (8 January 1881), 1-2, there 1.

<sup>115</sup> He admitted this in: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Nieuwjaar', *Ibid.* 1882-01 (7 January 1882), 3.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* 1877-01 (6 January 1877).

<sup>117</sup> This magazine was first and foremost meant to publish sermons, lectures and reports of meetings held in the Free Congregation. In addition, it wanted to report on all developments that might contribute to the hoped-for disintegration of the Dutch Reformed Church and on developments in liberal Protestant free congregations abroad. See: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Een woord vooraf', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* I (1878), 5-8. Reitsma erroneously states that the magazine was founded in 1879. See: Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederlanden*, 420.

<sup>118</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 45.

<sup>119</sup> "...in geest en hoofdzaak..." Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>120</sup> E.J.W. Koch, 'Nog een woord over de aanneming tot lidmaat der gemeente als besluit van het voorafgaand catechetisch onderwijs', *De Hervorming* 1880-14 (3 April 1880), 54-55, there 55; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Kerkelijke kwestie – De synodale besluiten', *Ibid.* 1880-22 (29 May 1880), 86-87.

not effected.<sup>121</sup> Within the modernist movement, these synodal resolutions created an atmosphere of disappointment and led, with regard to church affairs, to a state of apathy.<sup>122</sup>

A second motive to devote more attention to social affairs had to do with a change in production. Attempting to expand the readership of *De Hervorming*, Hugenholtz insisted on the issuing of a separate Sunday paper, which would contain edifying readings and plainly written articles.<sup>123</sup> Such a ‘popular magazine’ did not (yet) come into being, but instead scholarly, theological articles were issued in a separate, small-sized booklet, the *Bijblad van De Hervorming* (*Supplement to The Reformation*), as of mid-1880. This journal, for which an additional subscription was required,<sup>124</sup> would continue to appear until 1897. An annual volume of the *Bijblad* consisted of four to eleven numbers and contained eighty to one hundred and seventy-six pages. With the most inaccessible theological pieces of writing now being transferred to the *Bijblad*, Hugenholtz was able to dedicate more space to topics other than church affairs.

A third and last stimulus to broaden the coverage of *De Hervorming* was a process of reorientation within the NPB, dealt with in detail at the beginning of chapter 7. Here it is sufficient to note that, starting in 1879, prominent modernists urged the NPB to shift its focus from church life to society. H.Ph. de Kanter was one of them.<sup>125</sup> Referring to the aim of the NPB to enhance a free development of religious life, he stated in early 1880 “not to understand how the NPB wants to achieve this [aim] without involving itself in the major social issues of the present, which directly relate to its aim.”<sup>126</sup> De Kanter and others argued that there were not only wrongs in the churches that hindered religious life from developing freely, but also and to an even greater extent wrongs in society. By writing more extensively on social issues, Hugenholtz responded to this sentiment.

Hugenholtz hoped that *De Hervorming* could now finally lose its image of being a ‘ministers’ magazine’ that it had inherited from the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*. This hope did not entirely come true, as the complaint that the magazine was only relevant to theologians would still be hurled at *De Hervorming* even decades after Hugenholtz’s resignation.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, by paying more attention to non-ecclesial topics, Hugenholtz thought, the importance of the magazine would increase. After all, as he felt, social issues were “way more important” than any church-related affair. Referring to the outcome of the Dutch Reformed synodal deliberations in 1880, the editor-in-chief noted that all of modernists’ “ecclesial illusions” had evaporated into

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<sup>121</sup> F. Pijper, ‘Levensbericht van Johannes Gerhardus Rijk Acquoy’, in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1897-1898* III (Leiden 1898), 290-331, there 309-310.

<sup>122</sup> E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Vraagbus’, *De Hervorming* 1885-05 (31 January 1885), 20.

<sup>123</sup> Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 141; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Iets over ons blad en de behoeften waaraan het te voldoen heeft’, *De Hervorming* 1878-02 (12 January 1878), 1; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘De achtste gewone algemeene vergadering van het Nederlandsch Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1878-44 (2 November 1878), 2-3, there 3; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Negende algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1879-45 (8 November 1879), 177-178, there 177.

<sup>124</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Bijblad van “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1886-11 (13 March 1886), 42.

<sup>125</sup> Lindeboom is wrong to think that De Kanter was a former clergyman. See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 31. He mistakes H.Ph. de Kanter, Jr. for H.Ph. de Kanter, Sr. (1800-1868), who had been a Dutch Reformed minister during his life.

<sup>126</sup> “Hoe dat nu mogelijk is, zonder dat de Bond zich mende in de groote sociale vraagstukken van den dag, die met zijn streven in regelrecht verband staan, verklaar ik niet te begrijpen.” Quoted from: H.Ph. de Kanter, ‘Twee voorzitters’, *De Hervorming* 1880-16 (17 April 1880), 61-62, there 61.

<sup>127</sup> [H.Y. Groenewegen in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Ons weekblad’, *Ibid.* 1897-47 (20 November 1897), 186-187, there 186; N.J. Beversen, ‘Nogmaals: onze partij’, *Ibid.* 1898-04 (22 January 1898), 13; G.J. Heering, ‘Ingezonden – “Hervorming” en “Stroom”’, *Ibid.* 1923-02 (13 January 1923), 14; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Twee kwesties’, *Ibid.* 1926-45 (6 November 1926), 354-355.

thin air. Modernists should therefore not be fixated on church reforms and should rather increase their efforts to spread their principles in society at large.<sup>128</sup> As of 1883, Hugenholtz suited the action to the word. He arranged with Tj. van Holkema,<sup>129</sup> who had replaced J.F.V. Behrns as publisher in October 1882,<sup>130</sup> to extend the number of columns per page from three to four. This better utilisation of space enabled Hugenholtz to bring the social relevance of the modernist movement in general, and the NPB in particular, even more into the limelight – something he considered to be, as he told his readers in the first issue of 1883, absolutely necessary. If modernists were truly convinced that their religious principles were beneficial to the common good, they should not hesitate to “scatter the good seed” outside of their own religious orbit.<sup>131</sup>

Hugenholtz managed to give *De Hervorming* a certain appeal. Although a new modernist periodical, the Rotterdam-based weekly *De Protestant (The Protestant)*, came into being in January 1883,<sup>132</sup> the number of subscriptions of the former steadily grew: between January and March 1883, the magazine gained one hundred and six new subscribers. In 1884, this number would grow even further as a result of the liquidation of the Amsterdam-based periodical *De Vrijheid*. A part of the readership of this last magazine took out a subscription to *De Hervorming*.<sup>133</sup> The increase in the number of subscribers did not keep pace with the growth of the number of NPB members, but all in all, Hugenholtz had reason to be satisfied.

His editorship came to an unexpected end in October 1885. Hugenholtz accepted a position as minister of a small, recently founded liberal congregation in the primarily orthodox Protestant Dutch immigrant community of Grand Rapids, Michigan.<sup>134</sup> Yet he would not put his pen completely aside. Between late December 1885 and 1896, he would occasionally write letters in *De Hervorming* about liberal Protestantism in America. Moreover, he would found a modernist opinion magazine, called ‘*Stemmen uit de Vrije Hollandsche Gemeente te Grand Rapids*’ (‘*Voices from the Free Dutch Congregation in Grand Rapids*’), almost immediately

<sup>128</sup> “*Allerlei heeft samengewerkt om [...] de kerkelijke illusies grotendeels in damp te doen opgaan. [...] Ook wij hebben [...] begrepen, dat er in onzen tijd nog belangrijker vragen zijn dan de kerkelijke.*” Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Nieuwjaar’, *Ibid.* 1882-01 (7 January 1882), 3.

<sup>129</sup> This publishing house would be renamed ‘Van Holkema & Warendorf’ in May 1891.

<sup>130</sup> The issue of 21 October 1882 (1882-42) mentions that Van Holkema had replaced Behrns on 1 October 1882, although the issues of 7 and 14 October still carried Behrns’s name.

<sup>131</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Particuliere en algemeene wenschen’, *De Hervorming* 1883-01 (6 January 1883), 1.

<sup>132</sup> *De Protestant* was not meant as a competitor to *De Hervorming*; its editors even recommended the latter to their readership. It specifically targeted readers in Rotterdam and surroundings, and had a stronger propagandistic intent than *De Hervorming*. See: ‘Wat wij willen’, *De Protestant* I.1 (6 January 1883), 1-2, there 2.

<sup>133</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], “‘De Hervorming’ en hare zusterbladen”, *De Hervorming* 1884-02 (12 January 1884), 7.

<sup>134</sup> A. Kuenen, ‘Binnenland – Verre vrienden in nood’, *Ibid.* 1885-21 (23 May 1885), 83; A. Kuenen, ‘Binnenland – Nog eens Grand Rapids’, *Ibid.* 1885-23 (30 May 1885), 85-86; ‘Binnenland – Grand Rapids’, *Ibid.* 1885-26 (27 June 1885), 102; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘De vrije protestantsche gemeente te Grand Rapids’, *Ibid.* 1885-30 (25 July 1885), 118-119; J. Bruinwold Riedel, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Lector ten behoeve van de vrije protestantsche gemeente te Grand Rapids’, *Ibid.* 1885-31 (1 August 1885), 121-122; J. Bruinwold Riedel, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1885-34 (22 August 1885), 134; J. Bruinwold Riedel, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1885-35 (29 August 1885), 137; ‘Binnenland’, *Ibid.* 1885-36 (5 September 1885), 141; J. Bruinwold Riedel, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1885-39 (26 September 1885), 154; J. Bruinwold Riedel, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1885-40 (3 October 1885), 158.

A first, failed attempt to get organised as Dutch modernist-minded inhabitants of Grand Rapids was made in 1875. See: P. van Wanroy, ‘De stichting der Vrije Hollandsche Gemeente te Grand Rapids, Michigan’, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Hollandsche Gemeente te Grand Rapids* I (1886), 6-11. The Free Dutch Congregation in Grand Rapids was incorporated as a branch into the NPB in 1889. Its history is expounded upon in appendix C.

after his arrival in the New World in 1886.<sup>135</sup> Before leaving for Michigan, Hugenholtz had managed to persuade J. van Loenen Martinet to replace him.<sup>136</sup>

At the start of his second term as editor-in-chief, Van Loenen Martinet wrote that he wanted to edit *De Hervorming* in the same spirit as Hugenholtz.<sup>137</sup> Indeed he did; combining his editorship with a position as reverend in the Dutch Reformed Church – what is more: even succeeding Hugenholtz as a minister in Santpoort<sup>138</sup> –, Van Loenen Martinet was just as critical of the existing churches as his predecessor. When the Kuyparian faction in the Dutch Reformed Church forced an inner-church schism during the so-called *Doleantie* (literally: *Lamentation*), starting in early 1886, he therefore greeted this rupture as a possible beginning of the reconfiguration of church life he hoped for.<sup>139</sup> Chapter 4 addresses this issue more thoroughly. Another characteristic Van Loenen Martinet and Hugenholtz had in common was a progressive liberal political persuasion, tending towards social democracy. While Hugenholtz had still felt the need to accentuate the anti-religious and ‘vulgar’ spirit of the early socialist labour movement in his editorials, only to ‘convert’ to socialism after his move to Grand Rapids, Van Loenen Martinet did not hesitate to show socialism to its best advantage.<sup>140</sup> According to his obituarist H. Oort, his political convictions, on which chapter 7 focuses, closely approached those of the future *Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij* (Social Democratic Workers’ Party or SDAP).<sup>141</sup> A last characteristic that Van Loenen Martinet shared with Hugenholtz was a strong drive to stress the social relevance of liberal Protestantism. As written above, Hugenholtz had

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<sup>135</sup> The magazine intended to strengthen the members of the Free Congregation in their faith and to give them the opportunity to express themselves, to provide modernist-minded Dutch Americans living scattered throughout the USA with edifying readings and opinion articles written in a liberal Protestant spirit, to counterattack orthodoxy, to propagandise, and to preserve the bonds of the Free Congregation with the modernist movement in the Netherlands. See: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Een woord vooraf’, *Ibid.* I (1886), 1-6.

<sup>136</sup> J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Tot afscheid’, *De Hervorming* 1913-52 (27 December 1913), 414-415.

<sup>137</sup> J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Een woord vooraf’, *Ibid.* 1885-40 (3 October 1885), 158.

<sup>138</sup> Reefhuis, *De Dorpskerk in Santpoort*, 25, 33. When Hugenholtz asked Van Loenen Martinet to succeed him as editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming*, the latter served the Dutch Reformed congregation in Zwolle. As he implied in his last sermon in Zwolle, held on 18 April 1886, he felt that combining a position as a minister in a relatively large city as Zwolle with a position as editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming* could only be at the expense of his ministerial duties. Devoting himself entirely to *De Hervorming* was no option, as he only received a relatively small consideration for his editorial responsibilities. In order to have enough time for *De Hervorming* without running the risk of neglecting his pastoral duties, he therefore felt that it was best to change Zwolle for a smaller congregation. Santpoort was an obvious choice: it was vacant as a result of Hugenholtz’s departure. Being modernist-minded ever since the emergence of the modernist movement and small even for rural standards, due to which it offered its ministers much time for intensive theological study, involvement in politics or journalistic activities, the Dutch Reformed congregation in Santpoort has played a remarkable role in the history of Dutch liberal Protestantism. Almost without exception, all of its ministers between 1857 and 1936 were or would become key players in the modernist movement. It was served by F. Rauwenhoff (1833-1867) between 1857 and 1860, H. Oort between 1860 and 1867, J.A. Tours between 1868 and 1874, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. between 1875 and 1885, J. van Loenen Martinet between 1886 and 1894, J. Kutsch Lojenga (1836-1911) between 1895 and 1905, W. Bax between 1906 and 1914, and G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga between 1915 and 1936. Van Loenen Martinet stepped down from the pulpit in 1894 in order to combine his editorship of *De Hervorming* with a position as editor-in-chief of the progressively liberal newspaper *De Amsterdammer*, which he held until 1896. From 1902 until his death in 1918, he was the pastor of the NPB branch in Bussum. See: J. van Loenen Martinet, *Mijn afscheidswoord aan de Zwolsche gemeente. Toespraak, gehouden den 18 April 1886* (Zwolle 1886); Oort, ‘Levensbericht van Johannes van Loenen Martinet’, esp. 56; H.J. Scheffer, *Henry Tindal. Een ongewoon heer met ongewone besognes* (Bussum 1976), 279-285; Reefhuis, *De Dorpskerk in Santpoort*, 32-35.

<sup>139</sup> E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Recht én recht’, *De Hervorming* 1887-30 (23 July 1887), 118; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Toch een leuze’, *Ibid.* 1889-02 (12 January 1889), 7; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 44.

<sup>140</sup> See also: Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 53.

<sup>141</sup> Oort, ‘Levensbericht van Johannes van Loenen Martinet’, 60.

enforced this drive by advocating the creation of a ‘popular magazine’ next to *De Hervorming*. As of January 1888, his wish finally came true; from then on, the NPB issued, in cooperation with the *Vereeniging tot verspreiding van stichtelijke blaadjes* (Association for the Dissemination of Edifying Treatises), a new weekly called ‘*Nieuw Leven*’ (‘*New Life*’).<sup>142</sup> As a result, *De Protestant* disappeared: its editors did not want to compete with the new magazine.<sup>143</sup> Van Loenen Martinet could now specifically target a readership of ministers and ‘educated laypeople’.

The establishment of *Nieuw Leven* more or less coincided with a gradual editorial reorientation, the second one in the history of *De Hervorming*. Starting in the late 1880s, the attention given to social issues began to surpass the amount of articles devoted to church affairs. Four factors can be held responsible for this. The first factor was Van Loenen Martinet himself. He was one of those modernists who felt that the NPB should focus less on church life and more on society. Consequently, he frankly discussed (socialist) politics in his editorials, yet to the dislike of part of his readership. Moreover, to the taste of some modernists who attached more value to the institution of the church than he did, Van Loenen Martinet brought his distaste of denominational church life too much to the fore. As early as the autumn of 1886, prominent NPB member J. Knappert (1836-1893) complained that non-modernists might interpret Van Loenen Martinet’s pronounced anti-denominational stand to be *the* official policy line of the NPB.<sup>144</sup> H.J. Lammerink (1830-1891), a board member of the NPB branch in The Hague, repeated this criticism at the 1887 NPB assembly. In imitation of the *Kerkelijke Courant*, *De Hervorming* should be divided, Lammerink therefore suggested, into an official part, reserved for statements made by the executive board of the NPB, and an unofficial part, for which Van Loenen Martinet would bear full responsibility. That way, it would become more evident that the editorials in *De Hervorming* did not necessarily represent the entire NPB.<sup>145</sup> Lammerink’s suggestion was not adopted, but the assembly did decide to change the subtitle of *De Hervorming* from ‘*Orgaan van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond*’ (‘*Periodical of the NPB*’) into ‘*Uitgegeven door den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond*’ (‘*Issued by the NPB*’).<sup>146</sup> In doing so, more distance was created between the owner of *De Hervorming* and the editor-in-chief. The way in which Van Loenen Martinet edited the periodical thus provoked some discussion and even annoyance. However, he generously gave modernists who disagreed with his views the opportunity to express themselves in *De Hervorming*. As he would later state, Van Loenen Martinet considered the magazine to be “an open tribune, accessible to every modernist who has something to say and knows how to say it.”<sup>147</sup> Nevertheless, this editorial policy could not prevent the subscription rates from steadily declining. After reaching its all-time peak of 1,161 subscribers in 1886,<sup>148</sup> *De Hervorming* lost slightly more than two hundred subscribers in the subsequent years.

<sup>142</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], “‘Nieuw Leven’”, *De Hervorming* 1888-01 (7 January 1888), 1. Erroneously, this issue was dated ‘7 January 1887’.

<sup>143</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Afgelost!’, *Ibid.* 1887-47 (19 November 1887), 187; ‘Aan onze lezers’, *De Protestant* V.52 (24 December 1887), 1-2.

<sup>144</sup> [J. Knappert in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Het kerkelijk vraagstuk in “De Hervorming”’, *De Hervorming* 1886-46 (13 November 1886), 185.

<sup>145</sup> H.J. Lammerink, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1887-42 (15 October 1887), 168.

<sup>146</sup> The first number to have this new subtitle was: *Ibid.* 1887-46 (12 November 1887).

<sup>147</sup> “...een vrije tribune, van waar elk uit onze kringen, die iets heeft te zeggen en het te zeggen weet, het woord kan voeren.” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Een nieuw begin’, *Ibid.* 1898-02 (8 January 1898), 5.

<sup>148</sup> Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 144.

Internal developments in the Dutch Reformed Church were a second reason why less attention began to be paid in *De Hervorming* to church affairs. Although the *Doleantie* did not bring about a permanent solution to the antagonism between modernists and those orthodox who stayed behind in the Dutch Reformed Church, it did lead, as an ‘aftershock’, to a general desire to prevent this church from further disintegrating.<sup>149</sup> Consequently, the factional struggle lost its intensity and even quietened down to a great extent, only to flame up again in the course of the 1890s. After the aftermath of the *Doleantie* had reached its climax in 1888, the year in which the highest secular judicial authority in the Netherlands repudiated all Kuypersians claims to church possessions, there were simply fewer factional quarrels on which to report.<sup>150</sup>

A third motive was the development of the modernist movement itself. Prior to the 1880s, modernists had been firmly convinced that the orthodox resistance they encountered was just a momentary obstacle to the ultimate triumph of liberal Protestantism. However, in the 1880s it became clear that modernists’ influence did not increase; quite the contrary, even the exodus of Kuypersians would not really change modernists’ position in the Dutch Reformed Church. As early as 1886, one modernist observer warned his fellow liberal church members that the “fear of Kuiper,” in which all other factions were united, was no everlasting binding agent.<sup>151</sup> Because it gradually began to dawn upon modernists that the advance of their movement had come to a halt in church life, voices calling for more attempts to influence social life swelled.

A fourth and last factor that intensified a focus on social matters was public debate in general: in the late 1880s, discussions on the unwanted side effects of capitalist industrialisation were omnipresent.<sup>152</sup>

Although a controversy with a member of the executive board of the NPB, dealt with in chapter 7, forced Van Loenen Martinet to abstain from writing editorials with a strong political undertone, the editorial course he set out in the late 1880s basically stayed the same until the end of the 1890s. Regarding church and theology, few modernist achievements could be observed in this period, which has therefore been characterised as a decade of weakening and subsidence.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>149</sup> W. Nijenhuis, ‘De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk en de Doleantie’, in: Bakker et al. (eds.), *De Doleantie van 1886*, 178-202, there 201.

<sup>150</sup> Those going along with the *Doleantie* grouped together in the *Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerken (doleerende)* (Dutch Reformed Churches (in a state of lamentation)). Due to the 1888 judicial decision, this de facto became a new church denomination. ‘Nederduitsch’ is an archaic word for ‘Dutch’. The Dutch Reformed Church used to be called ‘Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerk’ prior to 1816. Throughout the entire nineteenth century, Dutch Reformed congregations were still occasionally referred to as ‘Nederduitsch-hervormd’, to distinguish them from the Walloon, English and Scottish Reformed congregations in the Netherlands that had come to be part of the Dutch Reformed Church in 1816 as well. By adopting the name ‘Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerken (doleerende)’, Kuypersians reinforced their claim to be the true heirs to the Reformed Church as it had existed before 1816. ‘Doleren’ means ‘to regret something’, ‘to feel sorrow for something’ or ‘to lament about something’. The *dolerenden* lamented about the condition of the Dutch Reformed Church and, after 1888, about the fact that they were judicially forbidden to exercise their rights on the material possessions of Dutch Reformed congregations. See: J.C. Rullmann, *De Doleantie in de Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk der XIX<sup>e</sup> eeuw* (Amsterdam 1916), 222-228. In 1892, the *Nederduitsche Gereformeerde Kerken (doleerende)* amalgamated with nearly the entire *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk* (Christian Reformed Church), which united most congregations rooted in the *Afscheiding* (Secession) of 1834, to form the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*.

<sup>151</sup> “...Kuyperfobie...” Quoted from: V.D., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1886-52 (25 December 1886), 210.

<sup>152</sup> P.J.M. de Coninck, *Een les uit Pruisen. Nederland en de Kulturkampf, 1870-1880* (Hilversum 2005), 397.

<sup>153</sup> Between 1885 and 1900, *De Hervorming* contained numerous articles in which the perceived indifference, both in society at large and within the modernist movement itself, was lamented. E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘De verdreven, doch terugkeerende booze geest’, *De Hervorming* 1885-28 (11 July 1885), 109-110; W. Zaalberg, ‘Bedroefd en nochtans blijde’, *Ibid.* 1886-23 (5 June 1886), 89-90; W. Zaalberg, ‘Binnenland – Het karakter van onzen bond en

Modernists were not shown to possess as much zeal as ten to twenty years before; their active and passive participation in church council elections was rather low. The expectations of the earliest modernists and the founders of the NPB had not been fulfilled, which led to a search for new goals on the one hand, and to defeatism and acquiescence on the other. Finally, the numerical growth of the NPB came to a halt.<sup>154</sup> One of the consequences of this malaise was that several modernist periodicals, such as the *Bibliotheek voor Moderne Theologie en Letterkunde*, *Geloof en Leven*, *Morgenlicht* (Dawn) and *Los en Vast* (Movable and Immovable),<sup>155</sup> all ceased to exist due to a lack of interest.<sup>156</sup> For the same reason, the *Bijblad van De Hervorming* was issued for a last time in 1897.<sup>157</sup> *De Hervorming* was one of very few liberal Protestant periodicals that still existed in the late 1890s.

Afterwards, the atmosphere within the Dutch modernist movement became perceptibly different. The ecclesial and denominational awareness markedly intensified.<sup>158</sup> The interest in theology and church affairs grew. In consequence, *De Hervorming* began to devote more attention to church and theology once again. This editorial reorientation, the third in the history of the magazine, was primarily stimulated by three developments. First, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the NPB, celebrated in 1895, incited liberal Protestants to reflect upon their achievements so far. The outcome of their reflections was not particularly comforting. A couple of weeks before the 1895 NPB assembly, Miss E.C. Knappert (1860-1952) wrote an article in *De Hervorming* in which she attributed the ‘stagnation’ of the modernist movement in the preceding decade to liberal Protestants’ inability to turn their religious community into a mass movement. Modernists had not been able to propagate their principles within the lower strata of society, because of a lack of faith in their own faith, a lack of confidence in the strength of their own religious ideas and ideals, and because of the intellectualist character that still stuck to liberal Protestantism.<sup>159</sup> Others were less pessimistic, but agreed with E.C. Knappert that the NPB was not as influential or as powerful as it should be. W. Zaalberg praised the NPB for “having rescued thousands from a lapse into unbelief” and for “having fed thousands of children with spiritual brightness,” although he criticised the lukewarmness that he perceived among its members.<sup>160</sup> B.W. Colenbrander

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de historie’, *Ibid.* 1887-33 (13 August 1887), 130-131, there 131; J.H. Maronier, ‘Een getuigenis’, *Ibid.* 1891-36 (5 September 1891), 143; ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afd. Amsterdam’, *Ibid.* 1892-03 (16 January 1892), 10; L. Knappert, ‘Tegen den stroom in’, *Ibid.* 1893-23 (10 June 1893), 89-90; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Ons Allerheiligen’, *Ibid.* 1898-45 (5 November 1898), 179-180, there 179.

<sup>154</sup> The growth that the NPB had experienced in its early years strongly slowed down from the late 1880s onwards. See: appendix B.

<sup>155</sup> S. Gorter, ‘Bibliografisch album – “Los en Vast”’, *De Gids* XXXI.4 (1867), 153-160. *Los en Vast* was issued between 1866 and 1896, and (anonymously) edited by G. van Gorkom, H.G. Hagen (1831-1901), W. Scheffer (1823-1904) and R. Koopmans van Boekeren (1832-1896). According to Ten Brink, *Los en Vast* was founded “in order to have a say in the defence of the modernist movement in academic theology and the Dutch Reformed Church – the movement in which they believed with much ardour.” (“...om een woord meê te spreken ter verdediging der door hen met groote geestdrift gehuldigde moderne richting in de godgeleerdheid en in de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk.”) Quoted from: J. ten Brink, *Geschiedenis der Noord-Nederlandsche Letteren in de XIX<sup>e</sup> eeuw, in biographieën en bibliographieën, 1830-1880* III (Amsterdam 1889), 16.

<sup>156</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Ons weekblad’, *De Hervorming* 1897-47 (20 November 1897), 186-187.

<sup>157</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Een nieuw begin’, *Ibid.* 1898-02 (8 January 1898), 5.

<sup>158</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 49.

<sup>159</sup> E.C. Knappert, ‘Wij moderneren en het “volk”’, *De Hervorming* 1895-41 (12 October 1895), 161-162, there 161.

<sup>160</sup> “Want veel deed de bond wel reeds. [...] Dat duizenden bewaard zijn in den twijfelstrijd voor ondergaan, dat is zijn werk. Dat duizenden kinderen werden gevoed met frisschen levensgeest, dat is zijn werk.” Quoted from: W. Zaalberg, ‘Onze feestdag’, *Ibid.* 1895-43 (26 October 1895), 170.

congratulated the NPB for its propaganda efforts, but noted with regret that the “purification of the ecclesial situation,” after which modernists had aspired for so long, was still not realised.<sup>161</sup>

During the 1895 general assembly, Van Loenen Martinet expressed himself in a similar vein. In the speech with which he opened the meeting, he lectured that the NPB should not be too satisfied with itself. “After all, what I hear as a complaint, as an accusation and a condemnatory verdict against us, is that our aim is too vague and too broad; that our principles do not give enough to hold on to; that our convictions are too indefinite and ill-defined; that the entirety of our tenets is too small; and that our faith is extremely insignificant.”<sup>162</sup> In the following years, leading NPB members H.Y. Groenewegen (1862-1930) and L. Knappert (1863-1934) were seen to endorse Van Loenen Martinet’s analysis. Nevertheless, they held *De Hervorming* partly responsible for modernists’ lack of influence. The magazine was the ‘standard bearer’ of the modernist movement, but failed to turn this movement into a more tightly organised *party*, strong enough to have a bigger say in church and social life than it had had so far.<sup>163</sup> Although he felt that the word ‘party’ was rather ill-chosen, as it implied that modernists should all sing from the same hymn sheet, Van Loenen Martinet did take this criticism to heart: in 1898, he expressed the hope that *De Hervorming* would become more influential in public debate.<sup>164</sup>

Alongside a certain disappointment in the stagnated growth of the modernist movement, a decision that the NPB made with regard to social work was another reason for Van Loenen Martinet to adjust the focus of *De Hervorming*. As of the late 1880s, several NPB branches had begun to organise social welfare activities. Moreover, a national ‘commission for social interests’ was active in the NPB with the intention to reflect upon the contribution modernists could make to the eradication of social evils. A lively discussion consequently sprang up in NPB circles on the question of whether social welfare activities should be centrally coordinated and integrated within the framework of the national NPB. Ultimately, as chapters 6 and 7 show, this question was answered negatively.<sup>165</sup> As a result, the focus of the NPB, and hence of *De Hervorming*, came to be less on social issues.

A third reason for church affairs and theological themes to regain prominence as of the late 1890s was what can best be called an ‘ecclesial turn’ in the modernist movement, thoroughly analysed in chapter 4. Dutch Reformed, Remonstrant, Mennonite and Lutheran modernists all became more preoccupied with their own church communities, which did not

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<sup>161</sup> “...zuivering van de kerkelijken toestand...” Quoted from: B.W. Colenbrander, ‘Onze feestdag’, *Ibid.* 1895-43 (26 October 1895), 170.

<sup>162</sup> “Want hoor ik niet als een klacht, als een aanklacht en een veroordeelend vonnis tegenover ons streven, dat het zoo vaag, zoo algemeen is; dat onze beginselen zoo weinig vastigheid bieden, onze overtuigingen zoo zwevend en zoo weinig scherp belijnd [zijn]; dat onze dogmatiek zoo heel klein en onze confessie zoo bijzonder arm is.” Quoted from: J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Toespraak’, *Ibid.* 1895-44 (2 November 1895), 173-174, there 173.

<sup>163</sup> [H.Y. Groenewegen in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Ons weekblad’, *Ibid.* 1897-47 (20 November 1897), 186-187, there 186; H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Onze partij’, *Ibid.* 1898-03 (15 January 1898), 9.

<sup>164</sup> “...een nieuw begin...” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Een nieuw begin’, *Ibid.* 1898-02 (8 January 1898), 5. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Nogmaals: onze partij’, *Ibid.* 1898-04 (22 January 1898), 13.

<sup>165</sup> E.g.: H.C. Lohr, ‘Een onuitgesproken woord’, *Ibid.* 1898-47 (19 November 1898), 187; G. van Rossen Hoogendijk, ‘Het maatschappelijk werk in den bond in verband met de besluiten der algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1898-51 (17 December 1898), 204; 1898-53 (31 December 1898), 212; 1899-03 (21 January 1899), 10; 1899-06 (11 February 1899), 22; A. Carlier, ‘Maatschappelijke belangen – De bond en maatschappelijk werk’, *Ibid.* 1898-53 (31 December 1898), 212; ‘Maatschappelijke belangen – Uithet verslag der handelingen van de algemeene vergadering, 1 en 2 Nov. ’98’, *Ibid.* 1899-01 (7 January 1899), 2; I. van den Bergh, ‘Maatschappelijke belangen’, *Ibid.* 1899-01 (7 January 1899), 2; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Art. 1 van het algem. reglement’, *Ibid.* 1899-04 (28 January 1899), 14-15.



mean that they were no longer willing to collaborate and to strengthen the modernist movement at large, but did lead them to make sure that the reinforcement of the modernist movement as a whole, particularly a growth of the NPB, would not be at their own expense. Church practices and the institution of the church came to be appreciated more than before, even in the NPB. The emergence of malcontentism and right-wing modernism, which linked up more closely to ‘traditional’ Christianity than old-school modernism, intensified this trend. Although old-school modernist Van Loenen Martinet, who continued to believe that the church was an outmoded institution, was not very pleased with it, he could simply not ignore the ‘ecclesial turn’ that the modernist movement was taking.<sup>166</sup>

In 1900, the format of the magazine, which had not fundamentally changed since the first issue of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* in 1869, underwent a metamorphosis. New sections were introduced and existing sections were reshuffled. The periodical was no longer issued in folio, but in quarto. Instead of four pages, an issue of *De Hervorming* now contained at least eight pages. These alterations did not lead to a price increase: the annual subscription would only change in 1918, the year in which a fourth editorial reorientation would take place.<sup>167</sup>

Having experienced serious health problems in 1911, Van Loenen Martinet decided to retire at the end of 1913.<sup>168</sup> More than thirty-two years of editorial involvement with the leading Dutch modernist opinion magazine, of which four years as co-editor of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and twenty-eight years as editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming*, now came to an end. Dutch Reformed minister emeritus H. de Lang (1846-1932), whose first contribution to *De Hervorming* had been published in 1878 and who had been editor of the foreign section since 1884, succeeded him.<sup>169</sup> In an attempt to reduce the costs of publication, De Lang took over the publicity and administration of the magazine from publishing house Van Holkema & Warendorf in October 1914.<sup>170</sup> He followed the same editorial course as Van Loenen Martinet, with whom he had worked in close collaboration from 1901 onwards.<sup>171</sup> Although Lindeboom felt that “possibly the best years” in the sixty-two-year history of *De Hervorming* were those in which Hugenholtz had held the editorial sway,<sup>172</sup> most other commentators felt in retrospect that the best years of the magazine were those in which Van Loenen Martinet and De Lang had been in charge.<sup>173</sup>

In 1917, the executive board of the NPB felt that the existing editorial formula of *De Hervorming* had worn thin. Its ambition was to give the magazine a more ‘popular’ character in order to gain a larger readership; the financial situation of *De Hervorming* necessitated this. At the same time, the board wanted to give the magazine more influence in public debate outside

<sup>166</sup> Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 50.

<sup>167</sup> *De Hervorming* 1918-01 (5 January 1918).

<sup>168</sup> Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 144.

<sup>169</sup> H. de Lang, ‘Niet-kosteloos godsdienstonderwijs’, *De Hervorming* 1878-04 (26 January 1878), 1-2.; H. de Lang, “De Hervorming” 50 jaar’, *Ibid.* 1925-47 (21 November 1925), 369-370, there 369.

<sup>170</sup> [H. de Lang], ‘Redactioneel – In ’t nieuwe pak’, *Ibid.* 1914-40 (3 October 1914), 341-342.

<sup>171</sup> H. de Lang, “De Hervorming” 50 jaar’, *Ibid.* 1925-48 (28 November 1925), 377-378.

<sup>172</sup> “Niettemin zijn de negen jaren onder Hugenholtz misschien de beste geweest.” Quoted from: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 51.

<sup>173</sup> E.g.: [H.G. van Wijngaarden in:] ‘Kerknieuws’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXVII.306 (4 November 1920), evening paper A, 1; J.J. Meyer, ‘25 jaren kerknieuws’, *Het Vaderland* (23 August 1923), evening paper, 15; [H. Oort in: J.J. Meyer], ‘Kerknieuws – “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* (4 November 1926), evening paper D, 1; ‘Redactioneel – “De Hervorming” en haar doktoren’, *De Hervorming* 1926-45 (6 November 1926), 353-354, there 353; J.J. Meyer, ‘H. de Lang †’, *Het Vaderland* (24 September 1932), evening paper C, 1; J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerkelijke pers, oud en nieuw’, *Ibid.* (11 June 1942), morning paper, 2.

of the modernist movement. Van Loenen Martinet had stated to aim for that already in 1898, but had not been successful. Quite the contrary, as the next chapters demonstrate, the feeling to be marginalised both in church life and social life had become stronger and stronger in modernist circles in the early twentieth century. There was a general feeling that voices expressing themselves in *De Hervorming*, the tribune of the modernist movement, were not heard loud enough in intellectual life at large. Dutch Reformed minister A.H. van der Hoeve (1870-1943), the then general secretary of the national NPB, admitted that it was a great challenge to turn *De Hervorming* into a magazine with both a leading position in intellectual life and popular appeal, but he was optimistic about the chances of success: at the time, the NPB had 21,000 members, so it would be possible, he expected, to interest at least 10,000 people in taking out a subscription.<sup>174</sup> Another incentive for the executive board of the NPB to press for an editorial reform of *De Hervorming* was increased competition in the liberal Protestant magazine market. With the creation of *Teekenen des Tijds* in 1899,<sup>175</sup> *De Blijde Wereld* (*The Joyful World*) in 1902 and the *Weekblad voor de Vrijzinnige Hervormden* (*Weekly for Dutch Reformed Liberals*) in 1908, *De Hervorming* no longer had the monopoly of opinion making in modernist circles. Moreover, numerous local and regional magazines had seen the light in the early twentieth century, attracting a readership that might have otherwise taken a subscription to *De Hervorming*. Finally, another stimulus behind an editorial reform was that, due to the aforementioned ‘ecclesial turn’ and feeling of marginalisation, the NPB was (again) going through an identity crisis.<sup>176</sup>

Yet there was not enough enthusiasm in NPB branches for the editorial reform after which the board aspired. Some branches were in favour of turning *De Hervorming* into a magazine exclusively intended for ‘intellectuals’; others opted for a transformation of *De Hervorming* into a news bulletin in the strict sense of the word, limiting itself to NPB-related matters.<sup>177</sup> Prominent NPB members shot down the board’s proposal as well. H. Vrendenberg Czn. (1835-1918), who had been editor-in-chief of *Nieuw Leven* from its creation in 1888 to 1913, did not believe that *De Hervorming* would ever be able to get 10,000 subscribers.<sup>178</sup> Jurist C. Bake (1856-1936) deemed it unwise to change the editorial format, as it functioned perfectly well in its current form as a platform for modernists to exchange opinions.<sup>179</sup> Journalist-minister C.E. Hooykaas (1878-1933) feared that a ‘popularisation’ of *De Hervorming* would be the *coup de grâce* to the local and regional modernist press.<sup>180</sup> Even more important, De Lang was unfavourably disposed towards the plan to popularise *De Hervorming*.<sup>181</sup> A couple of weeks before the 1917 NPB assembly, Van der Hoeve therefore announced that the board no longer aimed at giving the magazine a more popular appeal, while keeping its other ambition. *De Hervorming* should convince the secularised or religiously indifferent political, intellectual and

<sup>174</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Officiële mededeelingen’, *De Hervorming* 1917-19 (12 May 1917), 159; 1917-20 (19 May 1917), 167.

<sup>175</sup> Not to be confused with the already mentioned homonymic magazine that was published in 1858-1859.

<sup>176</sup> A short retrospective of this identity crisis is given in: K.H. Boersema, ‘Het vijf en zeventigjarig bestaan van den N.P.B.’, *Bondsnieuws* V.10 (2 May 1946), 4.

<sup>177</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Officiële mededeelingen’, *De Hervorming* 1917-22 (2 June 1917), 183.

<sup>178</sup> H. Vrendenberg Cz., ‘Hoofdartikelen – Een herinnering van dertig jaren geleden’, *Ibid.* 1917-26 (30 June 1917), 210-211.

<sup>179</sup> C. Bake, ‘Ingezonden’, *Ibid.* 1917-32 (11 August 1917), 265.

<sup>180</sup> C.E. Hooykaas, ‘Ingezonden – “De Hervorming” hervormd?’, *Ibid.* 1917-39 (29 September 1917), 322-323.

<sup>181</sup> Van Driel, ““De Hervorming””, 146; [H. de Lang], ‘Redactioneel – De plannen met ons blad’, *Ibid.* 1917-41 (13 October 1917), 339-340.

cultural elite of the abilities of liberal Protestantism, demonstrating that the modernist movement had a word to say in all current affairs in political, intellectual and cultural life.<sup>182</sup>

The general assembly assented to this revised proposal.<sup>183</sup> As of January 1918, a five-headed board of editors replaced De Lang. New sections were introduced. M.C. van Mourik Broekman was appointed as editor of the section 'Religion and Philosophy', H.T. de Graaf became the editor of the section 'Religion and Society', Dutch Reformed minister K.F. Proost (1883-1962) was approached to edit the section 'Arts and Literature', Lutheran minister A.C. Schade van Westrum (1876-1929) was given the task of discussing church life in the Netherlands, and Van der Hoeve would write about NPB-related matters. These five editors were recruited from the full width of the modernist movement, although right-wing modernists were not represented at the editorial level. This was, however, only accidental: right-wing modernist G.J. Heering (1879-1955) had been asked to join the editorial board, but had, for unknown reasons, rejected this invitation.<sup>184</sup> *De Hervorming* would again be printed in folio, reducing the number of pages of each issue to four. Because magazines that were issued by a publishing house affiliated to the Dutch Publishing Association could be printed with a discount, it was decided to place the publicity and administration of *De Hervorming* with publisher P.M. Wink in Zaltbommel.<sup>185</sup> The annual subscription rate was lowered from f4.80 to f2.50.

The 1918 reorganisation turned out to be a fiasco. Almost from the very beginning, complaints were uttered about the long-windedness, complexity and limited newsworthiness of the articles published in the new sections. Although the number of subscribers initially slightly increased, particularly due to the lowered subscription fee, *De Hervorming* did not manage to meet the board's expectations. The magazine would be profitable if a number of 5,000 subscribers could be reached,<sup>186</sup> but this target figure never came within reach. Because of this, and because of a severe rise in printing costs after the First World War, the subscription rate had to be raised to f4.50 as of 1920. Accordingly, *De Hervorming* lost a significant part of its readership, leading to another price increase in February 1921 (f4.70) and again in January 1922 (f5.00).

The founding of *De Stroom* (*The Stream*) in 1922 led to a further decrease of the number of subscribers to *De Hervorming*. This weekly, of which C.E. Hooykaas and Mennonite minister S.H.N. Gorter (1885-1967) were editors-in-chief, closely resembled what *De Hervorming* had looked like before 1918, and hence was an interesting alternative to those who were displeased with the new style of *De Hervorming*.<sup>187</sup> *De Stroom* gradually took over the role as

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<sup>182</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Ingezonden – Het Hervormingsplan', *Ibid.* 1917-40 (6 October 1917), 331-332.

<sup>183</sup> C.E. Hooykaas, 'Godsdienstig leven in Nederland CCXX. Expansie in den Protestantenvond', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XC.28963 (7 November 1917), evening paper, 5.

<sup>184</sup> Van Driel, "'De Hervorming'", 146.

<sup>185</sup> Contrary to what Van Driel suggests, Van Loghum Slaterus & Visser became the new publisher of *De Hervorming* only in 1923. Publishers of the magazine were P.M. Wink from 1918 until 1921 and Ellerman, Harms & Co. in 1922. Cf.: *Ibid.*, 147, note 45.

<sup>186</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Ingezonden – Het Hervormingsplan', *De Hervorming* 1917-40 (6 October 1917), 331-332, there 331.

<sup>187</sup> *De Stroom* was originally meant to target readers in the region of Rotterdam. See: C.E. Hooykaas and S.H.N. Gorter, 'Met onze lezers – Ons doel en ons plan', *De Stroom* I.1 (17 December 1921), 2. However, it soon gained a national readership. As of 5 January 1929, a separate supplement for readers in the region of Amsterdam was issued. The *BNPP* is wrong to suggest that this supplement was issued almost immediately from the start of *De Stroom*. See: F. Dijkema et al., 'Aan den lezer', *Amsterdamsch Bijblad van De Stroom* VIII.5 (5 January 1929), 1; 'De Stroom', in: G. Harinck et al. (eds.), *BNPP IV* (Amstelveen 2010), 232-233. The confusion of the *BNPP* was probably due to the fact that the numbering of the *Bijblad* followed that of *De Stroom*.

leading opinion magazine in the modernist movement. To turn the tide, *De Hervorming* was again printed in the handier quarto size as of 1921. New publishing houses were approached to make the magazine more profitable: the *Amsterdamsche Boek- en Steendrukkerij v/h Ellerman, Harms & Co.* in 1922, and *Van Loghum Slaterus & Visser* in 1923.<sup>188</sup> However, these external changes were of no avail as long as the content of *De Hervorming* continued to be, as one critic put it, “extremely hard to digest.”<sup>189</sup>

In 1924, the general assembly took action: the target audience of ‘intellectuals’ still ignored *De Hervorming*, while more and more NPB members discontinued their subscription. To stop this second trend, the magazine had to increase its coverage of affairs that were more strictly related to the NPB.<sup>190</sup> The wish to change the editorial formula yet again was linked with the development of the modernist movement. As the ‘ecclesial turn’ was severely challenging the position of the NPB, explained in chapter 4, it was deemed necessary to reinforce the ‘*bondsbewustzijn*’ in modernist circles: modernists’ awareness of having an organisation that served their common interests in the form of the NPB had to be increased, as well as their commitment to the NPB. After the 1924 NPB meeting, the five editors of *De Hervorming* entered into negotiations with *De Stroom* about some form of cooperation and had talks with the editorial board of the *Algemeen Weekblad voor Vrijzinnig-Godsdienstigen (General Weekly for Religious Liberals)* about producing an NPB newsletter that could be a supplement to this magazine. Because their attempts failed and their own enthusiasm to devote more attention to NPB-related matters in *De Hervorming* was low, the editors felt compelled to resign.<sup>191</sup>

In the last issue of 1924, Van Mourik Broekman, De Graaf, Proost, Schade van Westrum and Van der Hoeve looked back upon the seven years in which they had staffed the editorial board of *De Hervorming*. They implied that they regarded all criticism that they had received during those seven years as inappropriate. After all, in 1918, they had been specifically instructed to write their articles with a readership of ‘intellectuals’ in mind. Instead of blaming the editors for not striking a more popular note, those modernists who had complained about the new style of *De Hervorming* would have been better off asking themselves “whether they, for their part, have made the mental effort necessary to read a magazine that could not be and was not allowed to be a popular magazine.”<sup>192</sup> Nonetheless, historiography would pass a scathing judgment on the quintet. In 1935, Lindeboom wrote that the fiasco of the 1918 editorial reform was “commensurate” with the “enthusiasm and clarion call” with which this reform had been announced in 1918. According to him, and J.J. Meyer,<sup>193</sup> the five editors had demonstrated that they were not as journalistically gifted as Hugenholtz, Van Loenen Martinet and De Lang, the

<sup>188</sup> The *Amsterdamsche Boek- en Steendrukkerij v/h Ellerman, Harms & Co.* had already been the printing house of *De Hervorming* from January 1900 onwards.

<sup>189</sup> “...een blad als dit, dat nog al eens zwaar te verteren kolommen bevat.” Quoted from: H.U. Meyboom, ‘Ingezonden’, *De Hervorming* 1920-49 (11 December 1920), 195.

<sup>190</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Hoofdartikel – De jaarvergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond te Rotterdam’, *Ibid.* 1924-44 (1 November 1924), 345-347, there 346.

<sup>191</sup> Van Driel, “‘De Hervorming’”, 148.

<sup>192</sup> “Misschien brengt die erkenning sommige lezers er toe zich af te vragen of zij, van hun kant, niet ook wel eens zijn tekort geschoten in geestelijke inspanning, die nu eenmaal noodig is voor het lezen van een blad dat geen populair blad wilde zijn en het ook niet mocht zijn.” Quoted from: M.C. van Mourik Broekman et al., ‘Aan onze lezers’, *De Hervorming* 1924-52 (27 December 1924), 409-410, there 409.

<sup>193</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 99; J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerkelijke pers, oud en nieuw’, *Het Vaderland* (11 June 1942), morning paper, 2.

last of whom “probably was the most competent editor *De Hervorming* has ever had.”<sup>194</sup> Some of the editors, Lindeboom continued, “wrote in a too cerebral way, others discussed matters almost no-one cared about, [and] the editor of the church section was particularly adept at venting harsh criticism regarding everything related to the church.” As a result, “the magazine that should have satisfied everybody eventually satisfied nobody.”<sup>195</sup> In 1989, J.P. Heering expressed himself in a similar vein. He wittily (yet rather exaggeratedly) remarked that between 1918 and 1924, “the section on church affairs became ever smaller and less meaningful, while the one on arts and literature more or less became the most sizeable and most important section [of *De Hervorming*].”<sup>196</sup>

As of January 1925, former Lutheran minister A.E.F. Junod (1876-1944), who had gained experience in the magazine industry as editor of the liberal Lutheran monthly *De Wachter* (*The Watchman*), was responsible for the content of *De Hervorming*. Promising to write in a more accessible style than his five predecessors,<sup>197</sup> Junod’s main concern was to raise the number of subscribers by at least 300.<sup>198</sup> To accentuate that *De Hervorming* would now pay more attention to what was going on *within* the NPB, its subtitle was changed into ‘*Centraal Orgaan van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond*’ (‘*Central Magazine of the Dutch League of Protestants*’). Just as in previous cases, the switch to a new editor-in-chief was coupled with a switch to a new publishing house located in the proximity of this new editor’s domicile, in this case to the ‘s-Gravenhaagsche Boek- en Handelsdrukkerij v/h Gebr. Giunta d’Albani.

However, criticism on *De Hervorming* did not die down. Complaints were uttered that the new editorial formula, in which the magazine would both be the official newsletter of the NPB and deal with current affairs in a broader sense, was half-hearted. As an opinion magazine, critics argued that *De Hervorming* was no longer needed.<sup>199</sup> Next to *De Stroom*, the weekly *Kerk en Volk* (*Church and Nation*), created as a merger of the *Weekblad voor de Vrijzinnige Hervormden* and the *Algemeen Weekblad voor Vrijzinnig-Godsdienstigen* in 1925, was there to serve “those who ask us, proponents of free religiosity and men of the church, to give them guidance in the broad spectrum of life and to highlight the relevance and essentiality of the church amidst our nation.”<sup>200</sup> Moreover, in January 1926, *De Smidse* (*The Forge*) joined the ranks of modernist opinion magazines. This monthly, published by Van Loghum Slaterus, was edited by, among others, Van Mourik Broekman, De Graaf and Proost, whereas Schade van Westrum

<sup>194</sup> “Met hem [*De Lang*, TK] ging misschien de bekwaamste redacteur heen, die ‘De Herv.’ ooit heeft gehad.” Quoted from: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 99, note 1.

<sup>195</sup> “Met veel enthousiasme en fanfares werd de nieuwe koers aangekondigd en begroet; het fiasco was er aan evenredig. [...] Sommigen schreven te geleerd, anderen behandelden onderwerpen die zoo goed als niemand interesseerden, de redacteur van de kerkelijke rubriek was vooral sterk in afbrekende kritiek op alles wat met de kerk te maken had. Het blad dat veelzijdig had moeten bevredigen, bevredigde ten slotte niemand.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>196</sup> “De rubriek ‘kerkelijk leven’ werd steeds kleiner en onbeduidender, terwijl ‘kunst en letteren’ ongeveer de omvangrijkste en belangrijkste rubriek werd.” Quoted from: J.P. Heering, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd (1900-1925)’, in: Klein Wassink and Van Leeuwen, *Tussen geest en tijdgeest*, 57-160, there 132.

<sup>197</sup> A.E.F. Junod, ‘Redactioneel – “De Hervorming” voorheen en voortaan’, *De Hervorming* 1925-01 (3 January 1925), 1-3, there 3.

<sup>198</sup> A.E.F. Junod, ‘Aan alle lezers, vrienden van “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1924-50 (13 December 1924), 393; 1924-51 (20 December 1924), 401; 1924-52 (27 December 1924), 409. Junod is erroneously called ‘E.A.F. Junod’ in these three articles.

<sup>199</sup> Van Driel, “De Hervorming”, 149.

<sup>200</sup> “Zij vragen ons: gij mannen van de vrije godsdienstigheid, welke boodschap hebt gij ons te brengen op het ruime gebied van het leven. Zij vragen ons: gij kerkelijke mannen, wat hebt gij ons te zeggen omtrent het nuttige en noodzakelijke van de Kerk, te midden van ons volk.” Quoted from: F.H.G. van Iterson, ‘Strijd en opbouw – het nieuwe begin’, *Kerk en Volk* I.1 (3 January 1925), 1.

was listed among its ‘regular contributors’. The resemblance to *De Hervorming* in its pre-1925 format was so obvious that the editors of *De Smidse* straightforwardly admitted that it was indeed their intention to do what *De Hervorming* had previously tried to do: permeating intellectual life with a modernist spirit.<sup>201</sup> Even though *De Smidse* would not lead to as big a decrease in the number of subscriptions to *De Hervorming* as he feared, Junod initially considered it to be a “great threat.” He wrote to interpret the creation of *De Smidse* as a stab in the back, as a condemnation of his effort to make a success of the new editorial formula of *De Hervorming*.<sup>202</sup>

*De Hervorming* had not only become redundant as an opinion magazine, but also as a magazine reporting on meetings and gatherings held in the modernist movement. In the early twentieth century, newspapers with politically liberal leanings, such as the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, the *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *Het Vaderland* had begun to extensively report on such meetings and gatherings. What is more, the editors of the church sections of the three newspapers mentioned here – C.E. Hooykaas, working for the *Algemeen Handelsblad*, J.J. Meyer, working for *Het Vaderland*, and H.C.S. Wanting (1881-1953) and H.G. Cannegieter Dzn. (1880-1966), both working for the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* – were (former) ministers with modernist sympathies.<sup>203</sup>

The executive board of the NPB soon became dissatisfied with the new editorial formula itself as well. It wanted to use *De Hervorming* to avert a crisis within the NPB. Through the years, the executive board had appropriated more and more authority, at the expense and to the growing displeasure of local branches. The board hoped that it could decrease tensions if it was able to give account of its activities and decisions throughout the year, and if branches could inform each other about their activities on a regular basis. Ideally, every branch should therefore have at least one subscription to *De Hervorming*. A commission presided by B.D. Eerdmans (1868-1948), established at the 1925 NPB assembly to reflect upon the ongoing identity crisis with which the NPB was confronted, accordingly advised to turn *De Hervorming* into a monthly, in order to lower expenses and to satisfy board members of local branches who raised doubts about the amount of money annually spent on the preservation of a magazine that was only read by “five per cent of all NPB members.”<sup>204</sup> In addition, it proposed to turn *De Hervorming* into a newsletter in the strictest sense possible and to send a copy of every issue to all branches.<sup>205</sup>

Recognising that *De Hervorming* in its current form “no longer [had] a right to exist amongst dozens of other [modernist magazines] and church sections of daily newspapers,” modernist veteran H. Oort did not endorse those recommendations. In his eyes, the magazine should continue to be issued on a weekly basis and should cover “everything occurring in our own circles and all events occurring in those of non-modernists that are relevant to us.” He

<sup>201</sup> ‘Ter inleiding’, *De Smidse* I.1 (January 1926), 1-4.

<sup>202</sup> “...groot gevaar...” Quoted from: [A.E.F. Junod], ‘Nieuwe bladen en tijdschriften’, *De Hervorming* 1925-48 (28 November 1925), 381.

<sup>203</sup> For Hooykaas, see: A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Onze bladen’, *Ibid.* 1922-52 (30 December 1922), 411-413, there 411. For Wanting and Cannegieter, see: H., ‘Kerkelijk leven – Een interview over de kerk’, *Ibid.* 1919-16 (19 April 1919), 63; ‘H.C.S. Wanting – 25 jaar aan de N.R.C.’, *De Nederlandsche Journalist* II.15 (1942), 10. For Meyer, see: ‘Ds. J.J. Meyer’, *Het Vaderland* (22 August 1928), evening paper A, 1. Meyer consistently referred to modernism with the possessive form of the first person plural. See: Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 38, note 7.

<sup>204</sup> “*Er zijn stellig niet meer dan 5pct. van de bondsleden, die de ‘Hervorming’ lezen.*” Quoted from: B.D. Eerdmans and J. van Dijk, ‘Rapport Commissie Enschede’, appendix to *De Hervorming* 1926-41 (9 October 1926), 1-10, there 8.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

specifically urged to devote more attention to developments among liberal Protestants abroad.<sup>206</sup> In fact, Oort advocated turning *De Hervorming* back into what it had been between 1875 and 1917. L. de Baan (1880-1929), the editor-in-chief of the fortnightly *Noorderlicht* (*Northern Lights*), a magazine distributed in the three northernmost provinces, made a similar plea.<sup>207</sup> Periodicals as *De Stroom*, *Kerk en Volk* and local church bulletins had not caused *De Hervorming* to lose its significance; rather, they gave it a new right to exist. Being the official journal of the NPB, it was, according to De Baan, the obvious magazine to anthologise the most interesting articles published in other modernist periodicals. Additionally, it should contain announcements of all kinds of liberal Protestant organisations, and review books written by modernists.<sup>208</sup> J.J. Meyer, on the other hand, expressed serious doubts about the viability of *De Hervorming* in whatever form.<sup>209</sup>

Van Mourik Broekman intervened in the discussion as well. Acknowledging that *De Hervorming* had never had a popular appeal, he would regret to see it disappear. Less people had taken a subscription to *De Hervorming* than the NPB had hoped for, but the influence of the magazine on the modernist movement itself was definitely not proportionate to its small number of subscribers. *De Hervorming* had always had a readership consisting of theology professors, ministers and ‘educated’ laymen, who were in a position “to let the insights they gained by reading and participating in the discussions in *De Hervorming* find their way in the entire modernist movement.” Even though he had had its doubts about the editorial formula adopted in 1925, Van Mourik Broekman acknowledged that the magazine had addressed important issues in the past two years, which had not been discussed elsewhere.<sup>210</sup> It still made modernists aware of challenges and problems with which Dutch society in general, and their own movement in particular, were faced. Van Mourik Broekman rejected the suggestion to turn *De Hervorming* into a monthly, as a weekly frequency was more appropriate for a profound exchange of ideas.<sup>211</sup>

With the permission of the 1926 NPB assembly, the executive board of the NPB decided to follow the advice of the aforementioned commission, turning *De Hervorming* into a monthly issued magazine with a focus on NPB-related affairs. However, it simultaneously embraced Oort’s and De Baan’s suggestions: every NPB member should render account of what was going on in liberal Protestantism at large. A section reviewing trends in the Dutch modernist movement

<sup>206</sup> “Als vrijzinnig-godsdienstig weekblad heeft het naast een tiental andere en bij de uitbreiding van de rubriek ‘Kerknieuws’ in de dagbladen geen reden van bestaan meer. [...] Nevens hetgeen in onze kringen geschiedt mag er ook wat in die van andersdenkenden voorvalt en voor onze richting van belang is niet buiten beschouwing blijven. [...] Wij moeten er in ons blad althans op gewezen worden.” Quoted from: H. Oort, ‘De toekomst van “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1926-42 (16 October 1926), 331-332, there 331. Oort received support in: A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘Indië en de reorganisatie der “Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1926-44 (30 October 1926), 346.

<sup>207</sup> J. Hagedoorn, *Overdracht van meer dan letters... Van Gorcum 1800-2000* (Assen 2000), 117. Kalma thinks that the first issue of *Noorderlicht* was published in 1927, but this is incorrect. As early as 1924, the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* made mention of this periodical. See: J.J. Kalma, ‘Baan, Leendert de’, in: D. Nauta et al. (eds.), *BLGNP III* (Kampen 1988), 25-26, there 25; ‘Kerknieuws – De vrijzinnig godsdienstige pers’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXI.359 (28 December 1924), morning paper C, 2.

<sup>208</sup> L. de Baan, ‘Slechts twee mogelijkheden voor “De Hervorming”’, *De Hervorming* 1926-43 (23 October 1926), 338-339.

<sup>209</sup> J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – “De Hervorming”’, *Het Vaderland* (4 November 1926), evening paper D, 1.

<sup>210</sup> “De Hervorming heeft in ons land steeds een bijzondere plaats ingenomen, is ook in ouden tijd een blad geweest voor de elite. [...] Een kern van personen, theologen en niet-theologen [heeft] dit orgaan nodig [...]. En, dit worde niet vergeten, dat het daar aan inzicht verworvene ten slotte doorwerkt in de geheele vrijzinnig-godsdienstige beweging.” Quoted from: M.C. Mourik Broekman, ‘Twee kwesties’, *De Hervorming* 1926-45 (6 November 1926), 354-355.

<sup>211</sup> The *Algemeen Handelsblad* agreed: ‘Kerknieuws – De Protestantenbond’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCIX.32241 (2 December 1926), 10.

as a whole and a section reflecting upon liberal Protestantism abroad were called for in an NPB newsletter.<sup>212</sup> Lutheran minister and chairman of the board D. Drijver was appointed to edit the first section, while former Dutch Reformed minister G.H. van Senden (1884-1968) was put in charge of the second one.<sup>213</sup> Junod continued to be editor-in-chief. The annual subscription rate was lowered to f 1.50.<sup>214</sup>

Although Junod proved to be accommodating, the executive board of the NPB, evaluating the new situation after a year, felt the need to take charge of *De Hervorming* to an even greater extent. It therefore decided that its then chairman D. Drijver would not only continue to edit the section on Dutch liberal Protestantism, but that he would also assume the general editorship as of 1928.<sup>215</sup> Commenting upon the board's seizure of editorial power in *Het Vaderland*, J.J. Meyer gave Drijver the benefit of the doubt; Drijver had "[journalistic] experience, a good [stylistic] taste and a good sense of humour" and might be able to improve the prospects of *De Hervorming*.<sup>216</sup> Seven months later, Meyer wrote that the magazine did indeed appear to experience a "revival" with Drijver in charge.<sup>217</sup> Yet, appearances were deceiving in this case as well: the number of subscriptions to *De Hervorming* continued to decline, laying a heavy financial burden on the executive board of the NPB. When, at the end of 1933, Drijver announced that he was joining the editorial board of the new journal *Opbouw* (*Advancement*), a merger of *De Stroom* and two smaller modernist periodicals,<sup>218</sup> the board therefore seized the moment to pull the plug on *De Hervorming*. The issue of 21 December 1934 was the final one. At the time, there were only six hundred subscribers left. In the article in which he looked back upon the history of *De Hervorming*, quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Meyer concluded that the magazine had simply lived beyond its usefulness. In late 1917, 1924 and 1926, its existence had already hung by a thread. In all three cases, *De Hervorming* had only received "the bread of charity in respect for its illustrious past."<sup>219</sup> As of 1935, the executive board communicated with NPB branches through *Bondsnieuws* (*NPB News*), a simple, monthly circular with no journalistic pretensions whatsoever.<sup>220</sup>

<sup>212</sup> 'De hervorming van "De Hervorming"', *De Hervorming* 1926-47 (20 November 1926), 370; 'De nieuwe "Hervorming"', *Ibid.* 1927-01 (1 January 1927), 2.

<sup>213</sup> [A.E.F. Junod], 'Algemeen bericht', *Ibid.* 1926-51 (18 December 1926), 401.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.* 1926-51 (18 December 1926).

<sup>215</sup> S. Spaans, 'Bonds- en ander nieuws – Vergadering hoofdbestuur 7 December', *Ibid.* 1925-51 (19 December 1925), 405-406, there 405. Drijver had been a member of the editorial board of *De Smidse* in 1926 and 1927.

<sup>216</sup> "De heer Drijver heeft ervaring en smaak en – een goed humeur." Quoted from: J.J. Meyer, 'Kerknieuws – "De Hervorming"', *Het Vaderland* (10 January 1928), evening paper B, 3.

<sup>217</sup> "Waarlijk, onder zijn leiding knapt het op." Quoted from: J.J. Meyer, 'Kerknieuws – D. Drijver, 1903-19 juli 1928', *Ibid.* (18 July 1928), evening paper B, 2.

<sup>218</sup> The *Vrijzinnig Protestantblad* (*Liberal Protestant Magazine*) and *Opbouw. Een blad voor Haarlem en omstreken* (*Advancement. A Magazine for Haarlem and Surroundings*). See: [W. Verkade], 'De inrichting van ons blad', *Opbouw* I.1 (7 April 1934), 8. The *BNPP* claims that a fourth periodical was involved in the merger, called '*Soli Deo Gloria*' ('*Glory to God Alone*'). However, *Soli Deo Gloria* was not a separate magazine, but the subtitle of the *Vrijzinnig Protestantblad*. See: 'Opbouw', in: G. Harinck et al. (eds.), *BNPP* III (Amstelveen 2007), 188-189, there 189. The first issue of *Opbouw* was published on 7 April 1934. The term 'humanist Christianity', as its editorial board, consisting of eleven ministers and one law graduate, explained, meant that the magazine was based on the faith that God's love is most purely revealed in Christ and that human beings can only experience full communion with God if their inner lives are not restrained by doctrines. See: 'Opbouw', *Opbouw* I.1 (7 April 1934), 1.

<sup>219</sup> "Het blad ontving genadebrood uit eerbied voor zijn luisterrijk verleden." Quoted from: J.J. Meyer, "'De Hervorming' †", *Het Vaderland* (29 December 1934), evening paper C, 2.

<sup>220</sup> Van Driel, "'De Hervorming'", 151.



## 5. The Agency of *De Hervorming* within the Modernist Movement

The disappearance of *De Hervorming* was the disappearance of a genuine ‘institution’. No other magazine had a position similar to *De Hervorming* in the modernist movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. No other modernist magazine has ever reached the age of sixty-two, or even sixty-six if the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* is included in the picture. Its special position had also to do with its affiliation to the NPB, the association that covered, as explained in the introductory chapter, the full width of the modernist movement. Accordingly, the development of liberal Protestantism at large is reflected in *De Hervorming*. What is more, the history of the magazine *symbolises* this development. The polemical character of the magazine in the 1870s was symptomatic of modernists’ preoccupation with factional quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church, and gave expression to modernists’ expectation that their liberal Protestant ideas and ideals would become the new mainstream in church life. The stronger focus on social affairs in the late 1880s and the 1890s was emblematic of the increased effort to give liberal Protestantism more influence in social life. The fact that articles on church affairs regained prominence in the early twentieth century was a consequence of the ‘ecclesial turn’ that the modernist movement was taking. The editorial reforms that rapidly succeeded each other between 1917 and 1928 revealed that the modernist movement was trying to prevent itself from further marginalisation, and that the NPB was reconsidering its position within this movement. Finally, the switch from a weekly to a monthly frequency in 1927 was symbolic of the marginal position that modernists felt that they were in, as well as the loss of influence of the NPB in the modernist movement.<sup>221</sup>

As indicated above, the history of *De Hervorming* itself was the history of a magazine that did quantitatively never entirely come up to the expectations of both its editors-in-chief and the executive board of the association to which it was affiliated. However, its print numbers and number of subscriptions were not exceptionally low in comparison to other opinion magazines that were issued in Dutch Protestant circles. In 1882, for example, 3,800 copies of *De Hervorming* were printed each week, which was only 200 less than the number of copies printed of *De Heraut*, the neo-Calvinist weekly edited by Abraham Kuyper himself.<sup>222</sup> Some 600 people had a subscription to *De Hervorming* on the eve of its disappearance, in 1934, while the number of subscribers to *De Heraut* was approximately 1,000 at around the same time.<sup>223</sup> *De Heraut* has nevertheless had a tremendous influence and prestige in neo-Calvinist circles; in fact, it played such an instrumental role in the abovementioned *Doleantie* in 1886, that it is legitimate to question whether this schism in the Dutch Reformed Church would have become such a large-scale event,

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<sup>221</sup> Still in 1903, Mennonite minister P. Feenstra, Jr. had called for a *daily* newspaper on modernist principles, after the example of Roman Catholic and neo-Calvinist dailies. Only then, he had argued, could modernists influence public opinion to a greater extent. See: [P. Feenstra, Jr. in:] ‘Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne theologen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXVI.23819 (1 September 1903), evening paper, 6. The history of four Roman Catholic dailies is discussed in: M. de Coo-Wijgerinck, O.S. Lankhorst and J.H. Roes (eds.), *De gezegende pers. Aspecten van de katholieke persgeschiedenis in Nederland tijdens de 19<sup>de</sup> en 20<sup>ste</sup> eeuw* (Zeist 1989), 187-302. A detailed historical sketch of several orthodox Protestant dailies is given in: B. van der Ros (ed.), *Geschiedenis van de christelijke dagbladpers in Nederland* (Kampen 1993). A modernist daily never came into being, more than likely because there was no consensus in modernist circles regarding social and political matters.

<sup>222</sup> Hemels, *De Nederlandse pers voor en na de afschaffing van het dagbladzegel*, 679. As appendix A shows, the number of subscriptions to *De Hervorming* was much smaller than the number of copies at around 1882.

<sup>223</sup> Harinck, *De Reformatie*, 336. The number of subscribers to *De Hervorming* is mentioned in appendix A.

or would have occurred at all, if *De Heraut* had not been there.<sup>224</sup> Still in the 1930s, “the weekly was held in high esteem in parsonages and consistories,” that is, among those who made the decisions and had the lead in neo-Calvinist church life.<sup>225</sup> As a result, *De Heraut* still exerted a decisive influence on controversies arising in the Reformed Churches in that decade. In the context of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the number of copies of and the number of subscriptions to a magazine are therefore not adequate to measure a magazine’s influence and significance. It is arguably more indicative to look at the prestige and readership of a magazine. This applies to *De Hervorming* as well. Although the subscription records of this magazine have not been preserved, it can safely be concluded that *De Hervorming* at least had a substantial amount of theologians, including ministers, among its readership. After all, the great majority of the articles and letters to the editor published in the magazine were written by theologians. As substantiated in chapter 6, the latter were just as much ‘in charge’ in liberal Protestant circles as they were in neo-Calvinist ones. They were the opinion leaders and the ones taking initiatives to concretise the endeavour to modernise Christianity and to Christianise society. As the next chapters show in more detail, many of these initiatives stemmed from discussions held in *De Hervorming*. Modernist ministers knew that this magazine, due to the fact that it had been founded already in 1873 (or even 1869, if the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* is taken into account), and its affiliation to the NPB (the central organisation within the modernist movement), had the most reach, prestige and impact among modernists, and was therefore the main channel through which they could find support for their ideas. For these same reasons, *De Hervorming* fulfilled several roles in modernist circles simultaneously, as such being an agent in the modernist movement more than any other liberal Protestant opinion magazine.

A first function that *De Hervorming* had was a propagandistic one. Ideas and ideals circulating in the full width of the modernist movement were put forward in *De Hervorming* and were supposed to percolate into public opinion *through* this magazine. If non-modernists wanted to know what was going on in the modernist movement at large, they could best consult *De Hervorming*. This was indeed acknowledged. As late as 1922, for example, Kuypertian theologian V. Hepp (1879-1950) wrote in *De Reformatie* that “for outsiders, *De Hervorming* is still way more important than, for instance, the *Weekblad voor de Vrijzinnige Hervormden*.”<sup>226</sup>

Commenting upon current affairs from a modernist perspective was a second function *De Hervorming* had. Until the early twentieth century, there was a general feeling in modernist circles that newspapers with politically liberal leanings did not pay enough attention to religious life<sup>227</sup> or neglected the interests of modernists, most of whom were among their readership.<sup>228</sup>

<sup>224</sup> See, e.g.: W. Bakker, ‘De Doleantie in den lande. Uitbreiding en consolidatie’, in: Bakker et al. (eds.), *De Doleantie van 1886*, 106-148, there 129; Harinck, *De Reformatie*, 14. For the agency of opinion magazines in (neo-Calvinist) church life, see also: G. Harinck, “‘De Reformatie’ als motor van vernieuwingen”, *Radix* XIV (1988), 12-19.

<sup>225</sup> “...het weekblad genoot in pastorieën en kerkeraadskamers groot gezag.” Quoted from: Harinck, *De Reformatie*, 336.

<sup>226</sup> “‘De Hervorming’ [...] is, vooral voor buitenstaanders, toch altijd veel belangrijker dan het ‘Weekblad voor Vrijzinnig-Hervormden’.” Quoted from: V. Hepp, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De crisis in den Protestantenbond’, *De Reformatie* III.7 (17 November 1922), 51.

<sup>227</sup> E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Een misverstand’, *De Hervorming*, 1891-06 (7 February 1891), 22-23, there 23; ‘Binnenland – Onze koninginnen in Parijs ter kerk’, *Ibid.* 1898-17 (23 April 1898), 66.

<sup>228</sup> This changed as of the 1900s, as G.J. Heering noticed with satisfaction: “In the last years, the influential [*Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*] explicitly embraced the liberal Christian principles, as is shown by its permanent and interesting section with church-related news items.” (“*Dit invloedrijke blad heeft de laatste jaren beslist partij*”

Yet a daily newspaper exclusively for the benefit of the modernist movement never came into being. Differences of opinion among modernists were simply too big. As Van Loenen Martinet explained in 1901, there also was a more fundamental reason for modernists not to follow the example of newspapers as the Kuiperian *De Standaard* and the Roman Catholic *De Tijd*. Modernists, he argued, acknowledged that religion and politics were not mutually exclusive, but *De Standaard* and *De Tijd* mingled the two in a way that was detrimental to both religious life and political life. These newspapers equated the politics of the political parties that they backed, which were based on the religious beliefs of a particular group, with ‘the will of God’. In line with that, those parties brutally denied supporters of other parties the right to call themselves ‘Christians’.<sup>229</sup> Van Loenen Martinet feared that a modernist daily newspaper ran the risk of fostering such a spirit of confessionalism as well: it would inevitably deal with political matters as if these matters corresponded one-on-one with a specific religious persuasion, and would hence foster a division of the Dutch population along doctrinal lines. Politically liberal newspapers as the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* and the *Algemeen Handelsblad* went to the other extreme. In modernist circles, their ‘neutral’ attitude towards religion was perceived as religious indifference. They did not assess religious convictions and the social relevance of religion at their true value.<sup>230</sup> *De Hervorming* therefore had a complementary function to these newspapers.

When the purchase of *De Hervorming* was discussed at the 1875 NPB assembly, some urged to give the magazine a new name, in which its relation to the NPB would be accentuated. However, the majority did not see any need for that, as the existing name aptly expressed the aim after which the NPB aspired: a reformation of church and society in order for religious life to develop in all freedom.<sup>231</sup> Next to confessionalism, there were other elements in church and social life that hindered such a free development, the suppression of which thus had to be put on the agenda in *De Hervorming* as well.<sup>232</sup> Creating a sense of urgency among modernists, the need to combat those ‘wrongs’, was consequently a third function that the magazine had. In *De Hervorming*, accounts were given of modernists’ participation in church council elections and in all kinds of initiatives in the sphere of welfare work, to stimulate others to do the same.<sup>233</sup> The magazine was hence not merely a ‘mirror’ of reality, solely ‘reflecting’ what was going on in church and society; as parts II to V of this study make clear, it influenced that reality as well.

The name ‘*De Hervorming*’ not only had a programmatic character, but also an apologetic one. As shown in more detail in chapter 3, orthodox Protestants consistently argued that modernists’ negation of Jesus’s physical resurrection, refutation of biblical infallibility, and denial of man’s

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*gekozen voor de vrijzinnig-christelijke beginselen, blijkens haar vaste en belangwekkend geworden rubriek ‘Kerknieuws’.*”) Quoted from: G.J. Heering, ‘Een protest’, *Ibid.* 1912-41 (12 October 1912), 327-328, there 328.

<sup>229</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Godsdienst en politiek’, *Ibid.* 1901-30 (27 July 1901), 233-234, there 233; 1901-31 (3 August 1901), 241-242, there 241.

<sup>230</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘De grondslag van het recht bij de liberale partij’, *Ibid.* 1883-22 (2 June 1883), 85-86.

<sup>231</sup> *Verslag NPB 1875*, 24.

<sup>232</sup> E.g.: W.R. Poolman, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1879-01 (4 January 1879), 3-4; H.Ph. de Kanter, ‘Twee voorzitters’, *Ibid.* 1880-16 (17 April 1880), 61-62; [H.Ph. de Kanter in:] ‘Tiende jaarfeest van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond te Deventer gevierd’, *Ibid.* 1880-45 (6 November 1880), 177-179, there 178; H. Vrendenberg Cz., ‘De Protestantenvond en de maatschappelijke noden’, *Ibid.* 1886-21 (22 May 1886), 81-82, there 82.

<sup>233</sup> One of many manifestations of this stimulus to set up social initiatives was the section ‘Healthy Philanthropy’ (‘*Gezonde filantropie*’), which was introduced in the issue of 6 December 1879 and disappeared after the issue of 18 June 1881.

innate depravity meant a decisive break with the Christian religion.<sup>234</sup> According to modernist opinion leaders, however, the opposite was true: modernism was in fact a *return* to the essence of Protestantism, indeed to the core of Christianity itself.<sup>235</sup> The name '*De Hervorming*' reinforced this claim: it was a direct reference to the Reformation, to the cradle of Protestantism.<sup>236</sup> The magazine frequently contained articles in which modernists were portrayed as the true heirs to the sixteenth-century Reformers.<sup>237</sup> Doctrinally, the Reformers had had views that were still professed in Protestant orthodoxy and rejected in modernist circles, but the 'canonisation' of their dogmatic views, modernists contended, had never been the Reformers' own intention. The latter's main drive had been to go back to the 'pure' religion of Jesus and to permeate church life and society with the 'pure' spirit of Jesus.<sup>238</sup> As modernists had exactly the same aspiration, they were depicted in *De Hervorming* as 'more Protestant', and hence 'more Christian', than their orthodox adversaries. Self-justification was thus a fourth function of the magazine.

A fifth function of *De Hervorming* had to do with identity. Having a subscription to the magazine was in itself a meaningful act: it implied that someone felt that he belonged to, or at least sympathised with, the NPB, and hence identified as a modernist.<sup>239</sup> No orthodox Protestant would ever consider taking out a subscription to *De Hervorming*.<sup>240</sup> Moreover, next to being an identity marker, *De Hervorming* was an identity *builder* as well. In the magazine, it was discussed what 'modernism' stood or should stand for and how it could be given shape in church life and

<sup>234</sup> During the entire sixty-two year existence of *De Hervorming*, modernists lamented that orthodox Protestants denied them the right to call themselves 'Christians'. E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland', *De Hervorming* 1883-40 (6 October 1883), 159; 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvoerbond – Vrouwenparochie', *Ibid.* 1884-07 (16 February 1886), 28; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Het christelijk karakter van de moderne richting', *Ibid.* 1884-20 (17 May 1884), 80-81; W. van der Vlugt, 'Rede', *Ibid.* 1891-44 (31 October 1891), 175-176, there 175; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Christelijke zachtmoedigheid', *Ibid.* 1900-15 (14 April 1900), 115-116, there 115; J.W. van der Linden, 'Waar is het paganisme?', *Ibid.* 1905-07 (18 February 1905), 50-51, there 50; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Van een Utrechtsche promotie', *Ibid.* 1912-23 (8 June 1912), 180.

<sup>235</sup> E.g.: 'Buitenland', *Ibid.* 1874-36 (3 September 1874), 4. This conception would be severely challenged in the Interbellum era. E.g.: D. Drijver, 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1930-10 (8 November 1930), 75-76, there 75.

<sup>236</sup> At the end of 1874, Mosselmans and Van Gilse explicitly stated this: "our magazine will continue to be called '*De Hervorming*', since we will continue to work in the vein of the church reformers [of the sixteenth-century]." ("*Wij blijven 'De Hervorming' heeten, omdat wij blijven voort arbeiden in den geest der Hervormers.*") Quoted from: [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], '31 December 1874 en 1 Januari 1875', *Ibid.* 1874-53 (31 December 1874), 1.

<sup>237</sup> The modernist movement wanted to finish the work the reformers had begun. E.g.: [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], 'Groningen, 29 Oktober 1873', *Ibid.* 1873-44 (30 October 1873), 1; [J.A. Böhringer in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Feestelijke bijeenkomst ter viering van den vijfden Nederlandschen Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1877-44 (3 November 1877), 2-3, there 2; 'Adressen aan de synode der Ned. Herv. Kerk', appendix to *Ibid.* 1879-25 (21 June 1879), 101; B.W. Colenbrander, 'Twee lijnrecht tegenover elkaar staande beginselen', *Ibid.* 1896-29 (18 July 1896), 113-114, there 114; [A. Bruining in: H.U. Meyboom], 'Rede van prof. H.U. Meyboom, gehouden te Leeuwarden 23 Oct. '12', *Ibid.* 1912-44 (2 November 1912), 353-355, there 353. See also: Zaalberg, *De godsdienst van Jezus*, 19; Kuyper, *Het modernisme*, 66, note 25.

<sup>238</sup> E.g.: W. Zaalberg, 'Nous Maintiendrons', *De Hervorming* 1875-04 (28 January 1875), 1-3; Melia, 'De missive van het hoofdbestuur der confessionele vereeniging aan de kerkeraden der Nederl. Hervormde Kerk', *Ibid.* 1875-25 (24 June 1875), 3-4; J.F.L. Müller, 'Huichelarij', *Ibid.* 1888-14 (7 April 1888), 53.

<sup>239</sup> The editors of *De Hervorming* put this forward repeatedly, for example in the edition of 10 November 1883: "show that you are well-disposed towards our association [by subscribing to *De Hervorming*]!" ("*Medeleden van onzen bond, toont eens dat gij ook bondsbewustzijn hebt en reikt ons ook hierin de hand!*") Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Aan de leden van den Ned. Protestantenvoerbond', *Ibid.* 1883-45 (10 November 1883), 180.

<sup>240</sup> As late as 1924, the orthodox Dutch Reformed weekly *De Waarheidsvriend* (*The Friend of the Truth*) wrote that *De Hervorming* clearly proved that there (still) was a deep rift between liberal and orthodox members of the Dutch Reformed Church. See: 'Uit het kerkelijk leven', *De Waarheidsvriend* XV.24 (16 May 1924), 2.

social life. *De Hervorming* helped modernists to see what distinguished them from others.<sup>241</sup> It contributed to the creation of an ‘invented tradition’.<sup>242</sup> For instance, certain historical individuals were recognised as ‘proto-modernists’ in *De Hervorming*, because they were said to have had an attitude of mind similar to that of modernists. Probably the most extreme example thereof was the pantheon of ‘Protestants’ that P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. presented in an 1898 lecture, referred to in the first chapter, and integrally published in *De Hervorming*. As such, the magazine helped to shape a ‘collective memory’ in modernist circles and hence offered points of identification in a history that modernists were all said to share.

While *De Hervorming* provided modernists with shared points of identification, it contrariwise also brought dissension into the open, bringing out factions *within* the modernist movement. In the 1870s, for example, there was a theological controversy between so-called ‘ethical’ and ‘intellectualist’ modernists regarding the vindication of religious faith. According to the former, justification for belief in God can ultimately be based neither on rational considerations nor on emotions. The ultimate reason for people to believe in God stems rather from the desire to be freed from the infirmity of human nature, and the need for sanctification, which slumber inside every human being.<sup>243</sup> In the early twentieth century, the modernist movement became internally more diverse, due to the emergence of right-wing modernists, a separately organised group of Dutch Reformed modernists, ‘occult-minded’ modernists, and socialist modernists, discussed in chapters 3, 4, 5, and 7 respectively. Although they did not hide their own preferences in theological, ecclesial and social matters, the editors-in-chief of *De Hervorming* gave each and every one of these subgroups within the modernist movement the opportunity to express itself. At the same time, they tried to take the sting out of conflicts, making sure that discussions would not dissolve into fragmentation. When right-wing modernists, for example, accused old-school modernists of neglecting people’s spiritual needs, Van Loenen Martinet and De Lang riposted that the former were more indebted to the latter than the former were willing to acknowledge.<sup>244</sup> Keeping the

<sup>241</sup> A. de Tocqueville and B. Anderson have extensively dealt with the question of how periodicals contributed to the creation of national identities. See: P. Okker, *Social Stories. The Magazine Novel in Nineteenth-Century America* (Charlottesville and London 2003), 27. Their observations apply to the creation of religious group identities as well.

<sup>242</sup> A term famously coined in: E.J.E. Hobsbawm and T.E. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge etc. 1983). To quote Hobsbawm, an ‘invented tradition’ is “taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past.” Quoted from: E.J.E. Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, in: *Ibid.*, 1-14, there 1.

<sup>243</sup> Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 106-109; J.W. van der Linden, ‘De geschiedenis en de beteekenis der “ethische” richting onder de modernen’, *De Gids* XLVII.4 (1883), 450-465. In the course of the 1880s, the ‘ethical’ current within Dutch modernism crumbled away. When J. Hooykaas Herderscheê, one of its most militant advocates, died in 1886, Van Loenen Martinet could write that “ethical modernism, in its original form, has disappeared.” (“...de ethische richting [is] in haar oorspronkelijken vorm verdwenen.”) Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Joh<sup>s</sup>. Hooykaas Herderscheê’, *De Hervorming* 1886-12 (20 March 1886), 46.

<sup>244</sup> Van Loenen Martinet tried to substantiate this claim by introducing a new section, called ‘Oud-modernen aan het woord’ (‘Old-School Modernists Speaking’), on 22 April 1911. When Van Loenen Martinet quoted S. Hoekstra in this section in the issue of 27 May 1911, malcontent Mennonite minister H. Britzel raised an objection: *oud-modernen* (first-generation modernists) and *oud-modernen* (old-school modernists) were two distinct categories. Hoekstra’s theological views, he argued, differed fundamentally from those identified as ‘old-school modernist’. For that reason, the section was renamed ‘Onze moderne vaders aan het woord’ (‘Our Modernist Fathers Speaking’). It was included in *De Hervorming* for the last time in the issue of 20 December 1913 (1913-51). See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Voor hart en leven – Oud-modernen aan het woord’, *Ibid.* 1911-16 (22 April 1911), 126; [H. de Lang], ‘Berichten, enz. – Modernen en dier geestelijke vaders’, *Ibid.* 1911-23 (10 June 1911), 179-180; H. Britzel, ‘Ingezonden stukken –

peace in a movement as diverse as the modernist one, keeping all modernist ‘frogs’ in the ‘wheelbarrow’ that was the NPB, was thus a sixth function that *De Hervorming* had.<sup>245</sup>

Creating a sense of belonging was a seventh function of *De Hervorming*. The NPB was founded with the intention of being joined by all Protestants who shared an aversion to confessionalism, regardless of their theological views. Yet, as explained in the first chapter, it did not manage to get a following outside of the modernist movement. As said in the introduction, modernists were found among various church denominations. The NPB was the central organisation round which they gathered. It furthered feelings of solidarity among them by facilitating encounters across denominational lines, which would, as some hoped, ultimately efface those denominational lines for good.<sup>246</sup> Encounters took place on the local level in NPB branches several times a month, on the national level during general assemblies once every year, and in *De Hervorming* once every week. By reading *De Hervorming*, modernists from all across the Netherlands could ‘meet’ kindred spirits living elsewhere, and become acquainted with the ideas those others had and the activities they organised. As such, *De Hervorming* was the ‘paper’ equivalent to NPB branches. In the magazine and in branches, modernists cultivated and celebrated their communality. Assembling in NPB branches was not only a means to achieve a certain goal, being the advancement of the free development of religious life, but also a purposeful act in itself: it was an expression of sociability.<sup>247</sup> *De Hervorming* was instrumental to this sociability, both within and between branches. The executive board of the national NPB incited branches to take a collective subscription to the magazine and to organise readings groups in which members could discuss the content of the magazine with each other on a weekly basis.<sup>248</sup> *De Hervorming* was in constant need of more subscribers to be issued cost-effectively, but the number of subscribers in itself did not correlate with the total number of people whom it actually reached: in 1891, each copy of *De Hervorming* was said to be read by four or five different individuals, meaning that it was read by 4,000 to 5,000 people respectively each week.<sup>249</sup> *De Hervorming* thus went from hand to hand and brought individuals into contact with each other. Moreover, it offered branches the opportunity to send in reports on lectures, meetings and

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Professor Hoekstra onder de oud-modernen!’, *Ibid.* 1911-23 (10 June 1911), 183. See also: J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Kroniek’, *Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift* III (1914), 305-320, there 305-316; [H. de Lang], ‘Berichten en mededeelingen – De moderne theologie in haar optreden en het religieuze volksleven’, *De Hervorming* 1914-29 (18 July 1914), 248-249.

<sup>245</sup> For a short characterisation of the ‘ethical’ and ‘intellectual’ modernists in the 1870s, of the ‘left-wing’ and ‘right-wing’ modernists from the 1900s onwards, and of the role *De Hervorming* played in discussions between these groups, see: Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 49-50.

<sup>246</sup> Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 50.

<sup>247</sup> In this respect, the NPB resembled the *Maatschappij tot Nut van ’t Algemeen*, local ‘departments’ of which were sometimes involved with the founding of local NPB branches. For similarities between the two organisations, see, e.g.: B. van Gelder and E.G. Hoekstra, *Spoorzoeken in de bonte wereld van geloven en denken* (Amsterdam [1957] 1973), 82.

<sup>248</sup> E.g.: J.A. Böhringer and J. Bruinwold Riedel, ‘Aan de afdeelingsbesturen van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond’, *De Hervorming* 1885-50 (12 December 1885), 197; I. van den Bergh, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Aan de afdeelingsbesturen en de correspondenten’, *Ibid.* 1888-06 (11 February 1888), 22; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Protestantendag te Bolsward’, *Ibid.* 1890-45 (8 November 1890), 179; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland’, *Ibid.* 1893-02 (14 January 1893), 7; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Naar aanleiding van een opmerking’, *Ibid.* 1895-06 (9 February 1895), 23; [H. de Lang], ‘Redactioneel – Berichten en mededeelingen’, *Ibid.* 1914-39 (26 September 1914), 333; ‘Advertentiën’, *Ibid.* 1925-43 (24 October 1925), 344.

<sup>249</sup> ‘Binnenland – De algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1891-45 (7 November 1891), 181.

festivities taking place in their midst, to inform members of other branches and hence to instil upon those others the feeling of being part of a community that exceeded the local level.<sup>250</sup>

Connected to this was an eighth function that *De Hervorming* had: it helped to build and to sustain an ‘imagined community’.<sup>251</sup> By reading *De Hervorming*, a modernist knew himself to be part of a community of individuals with a mentality supposedly similar to his own, most of whom he would never meet in person, but with all of whom he nonetheless felt connected. The magazine was, so to speak, the translocal ‘continuation’ of local branches. An NPB branch was small and geographically limited enough to give all of its members the opportunity to meet each other. It was hence a network in which individuals were connected to each other through personal contact. The national NPB, however, was too big to be such a network. It was therefore an *imagined* community. Membership of the NPB in itself was what linked individual modernists together in an imagined community, but it was *De Hervorming*, together with the annual general assemblies, through which individuals could actually *experience* being part of that community.<sup>252</sup> While helping to shape the NPB as an imagined community, the magazine itself, as argued in the introductory chapter, gave shape to the modernist movement as a discourse community. It was the main medium through which those who identified as ‘modernists’ made themselves heard, and as such the ‘channel of communication’ through which the modernist movement at large was recognisable as a community in the first place.<sup>253</sup>

A ninth and last function of *De Hervorming* was closely connected to the concepts of ‘invented tradition’, ‘sociability’ and ‘imagined community’. In sociology, it is a well-known principle that, in any given group, the threat of a ‘common enemy’, to which features other than those of the group in question are attributed, intensifies the feeling of togetherness within this group.<sup>254</sup> Accordingly, much attention was paid in *De Hervorming* to orthodox Protestantism. There was a comforting aspect to that as well. In *De Hervorming*, liberal Protestants who were denied the right to hold religious services of their own by the orthodox majorities in their respective congregations learned every week that, elsewhere, others were engaged in exactly the same struggle as they were.<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> Not to everyone’s satisfaction. At the beginning of 1914, G.J. Heering strongly advised the new editor-in-chief H. de Lang to change the section with NPB-related messages, because these messages were “hopelessly annoying” (“...hopeloos vervelend...”). Quoted from: G.J. Heering, “‘De Hervorming’ hervormd”, *Ibid.* 1914-06 (7 February 1914), 45-47, there 47.

<sup>251</sup> Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 48-49.

<sup>252</sup> Fostering and sustaining a collective memory is vital for every imagined community: all of its members need to be able to identify with certain events, figures, narratives and traditions – with certain ‘places of memory’ or ‘*lieux de mémoire*’ – to experience a sense of belonging. Examples of such places of memory in the imagined community that was the modernist movement are given in: De Baar and Van Dijk (eds.), *Herinnering en identiteit*. Van Weringh argues that magazines as *De Heraut* and *De Standaard* were “*indirecte sociale betrekkingen*” (“indirect social relations”) in neo-Calvinist circles, meaning that they were links through which individual neo-Calvinists were connected to other neo-Calvinists, most of whom they did not know in person, in an imagined community. The same goes for *De Hervorming* in modernist circles. See: J. van Weringh, *Het maatschappijbeeld van Abraham Kuyper* (Assen 1967), 2.

<sup>253</sup> Paul, ‘Religious Discourse Communities’, 111-112.

<sup>254</sup> Insightful studies dealing with this sociological law are: J.A. Aho, *This Thing of Darkness. A Sociology of the Enemy* (Seattle 1994); D.P. Barash, *Beloved Enemies. Our Need for Opponents* (New York 1994). For processes of ‘othering’ in the nineteenth-century Dutch Roman Catholic community, see: A.Th. van der Zeijden, *Katholieke identiteit en historisch bewustzijn. W.J.F. Nuyens (1823-1894) en zijn ‘nationale’ geschiedschrijving* (Hilversum 2002), 158.

<sup>255</sup> Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 57.

## **PART II**

Modernising Christianity:  
Ecclesial-Religious Life





Abraham Kuyper (*left*) had long hoped to expel modernists from the Dutch Reformed Church, but he and his sympathisers eventually marched out of this church denomination themselves as of 1886.

*Source: 'Revue van het jaar 1885 in prentverbeeldingen', Uilenspiegel XVII.44 (2 January 1886), 174.*



As of 1904, a separate organisation of Reformed liberals came into being parallel to the interdenominational NPB. This 1937 picture symbolises the liberal Reformed ideal of the Dutch Reformed Church as a broad *volkskerk*.

*Original source unknown. Copy derived from: K.M. Witteveen, Modern geloven. Een korte schets van de geschiedenis van de VVH (Maarssen 1995), 47.*

### 3. MODERNISM, ORTHODOXY AND SELF-IDENTIFICATION

#### 1. 'Chinese in Europe'

In an editorial, published in the Sunday edition of *De Standaard* on 17 November 1872, Abraham Kuyper depicted Protestant modernists as Chinese in Europe. The expression 'Chinese in Europe' had been in use since the eighteenth century as a pejorative metaphor, initially used by foreigners visiting Holland, to caricature the faded glory of the then Dutch Republic.<sup>1</sup> Kuyper applied the unfavourable connotations that this expression had to what he saw as the main characteristics of liberal Protestants. Chinese in Europe were an oddity, as were, in Kuyper's eyes, modernists in church life. Moreover, the Chinese were renowned for their predilection for the past and their lack of innovation, making them experts in copying methods and techniques from other people. Modernists were mimics as well: they had founded equivalents to orthodox Sunday schools, young men's associations, the *Confessioneele Vereeniging* (namely the NPB), orthodox tract societies (namely the *Vereeniging tot verspreiding van stichtelijke blaadjes*) and orthodox weeklies (namely the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*). Yet, as Kuyper noticed to his satisfaction, none of these copies thrived as much as the orthodox originals. As Kuyper implied, the modernist movement was just as isolated as China and would meet with the same fate. China had once been a superpower, leading in philosophy and commerce, but had fallen into decay and complacently clung to its past glory. The modernist movement had made headway before 1867, but its progress had been brought to a halt, due to orthodox victories in church council elections, afterwards. Modernists might still think that the future was theirs, but, as Kuyper believed, their days as leading theologians and ministers were numbered.<sup>2</sup>

Three months later, B.A. van Doorn (1811-1895), a liberal-minded deacon in Amsterdam, responded to Kuyper's editorial.<sup>3</sup> In an article in *De Hervorming*, he stated to not quite understand why Kuyper thought the expression 'Chinese in Europe' was a well-chosen metaphor to refer to modernists. After all, in Van Doorn's view, the expression applied more to Kuyper and his orthodox sympathisers than to modernists. As regards a predilection for the past, it was evident to Van Doorn that modernists did not resemble the Chinese at all. On the contrary, while modernists were oriented towards the future, Kuyper and his Kuyperians nostalgically cherished the supposed Calvinist heyday during the Dutch Golden Age. And as far as copying others was concerned, Van Doorn continued, confessionalists such as Kuyper were more experienced than their liberal counterparts: they mimicked ultramontane Catholics in everything. The Roman pope had its counterpart in orthodoxy's 'paper pope': the confession of faith. Confessionalists'

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<sup>1</sup> P.J. van Winter, *De Chinezen van Europa* (Groningen 1965); J.L. Blussé, *Tribuut aan China. Vier eeuwen Nederlands-Chinese betrekkingen* (Amsterdam 1989), 8-10.

<sup>2</sup> [A. Kuyper], 'Amsterdam, 15 Nov. 1872', *Zondagsnummer van De Standaard* 1.34 (17 November 1872), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Van Doorn was involved with the *Vereeniging tot bevordering van zelfstandig godsdienstig leven* (Association for the Advancement of Independent Religious Life), which tried to defend the interests of liberal Protestants in Amsterdam, particularly within the local Dutch Reformed congregation. See: B.A. van Doorn, *Overzicht van de handelingen der Vereeniging tot Bevordering van Zelfstandig Godsdienstig Leven te Amsterdam, gedurende haar tienjarig bestaan, 6 Mei 1882* (s.l. s.a.); T. van Tijn, *Twintig jaren Amsterdam. De maatschappelijke ontwikkeling van de hoofdstad, van de jaren '50 der vorige eeuw tot 1876* (Amsterdam 1965), 403. After the *Doleantie*, with which the next chapter deals in more detail, Van Doorn published two brochures in which he severely attacked Kuyper's way of acting in ecclesial matters: *Critiek over eenige geschriften, in zake den strijd op kerkelijk gebied* and *De kerkelijke kwestie van liberale zijde beschouwd*. Both brochures were published in Amsterdam in 1886.

missionary festivals, mass open-air manifestations of orthodox zeal,<sup>4</sup> were nothing more than a copy of popish processions.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, their supernaturalistic belief in miracles and their disrespect for individual religious convictions were features with which they aped ultramontanes. These examples could be supplemented with many more, Van Doorn concluded, but they were sufficient to make his point: instead of modernists, Kuypersians were the true ‘Chinese in Europe’.<sup>6</sup>

Unflattering metaphors such as the one Kuypers used were hurled at modernists from the formative phase of their movement onwards. Orthodox Protestants, Kuypersians and non-Kuypersians alike, claimed to see modernism – both modern theology and the modernist movement – as a detrimental phenomenon. They usually challenged its Christian quality. A classic repudiation of modernism was given by Kuypers in 1871.<sup>7</sup> Being convinced that modernism was a passing and superficial phenomenon, Kuypers referred to it as “a fata morgana,” “an attack on Christianity,” “completely devoid of reality,” “a heresy,” “no fruit, but rather the opposite of Protestantism,” “self-delusional,” “leading to spiritual poverty,” “preaching an abstract deity,” “praying prayers without depth,” and “lacking a true ideal.”<sup>8</sup> Earlier, orthodox professor J.I. Doedes and moderately orthodox minister J. Cramer (1833-1895) had blamed modernism for being ‘unreal’ as well: the former by making a dichotomy between ‘modernist’ and ‘apostolic’ Christianity and the latter by calling modernism an illusion.<sup>9</sup> Modernism was thus seen as ‘unreal’ in the sense that it was not consistent with God’s Revelation, as set down in the literal word of Scripture, and in the sense that it was ill-founded, both in theoretical terms and regarding its grounding in church life. These characterisations became fixed in the collective memory of Dutch orthodoxy and came to define the way orthodox Protestants generally looked at modernists. After the 1860s and 1870s, they would be repeated many times. As late as 1931, for example, the orthodox Dutch Reformed weekly *De Waarheidsvriend* echoed Cramer by commenting that modernism “gives people a stone for bread [...] and ruined church life,”<sup>10</sup> while in 1934, Christian Reformed theologian G. Wisse (1873-1957) repeated Doedes’s statement that modernism delusively rejected

<sup>4</sup> As Houkes demonstrates, *zendingsfeesten* (missionary festivals) not only propagated the issue of foreign mission among orthodox Protestants. Other topics, including evangelisation and social developments, were usually brought up as well. The manifestations themselves were meant to increase feelings of togetherness and helped to shape an invented community of orthodox Protestants. See: Houkes, *Christelijke vaderlanders*, 103-105, 112-113.

<sup>5</sup> Similar comparisons are made in, e.g.: C.P., ‘Bibliografisch album – “Het feest te Wolfhezen”’, *Het Leeskabinet* XXXI (1864), 233-235, there 235; Houkes, *Christelijke Vaderlanders*, 141.

<sup>6</sup> B.A. van Doorn, ‘Chineezen in Europa’, *De Hervorming* 1873-07 (13 February 1873), 3.

<sup>7</sup> For an analysis of the rhetoric and arguments Kuypers used in this lecture, see: A.L. Molendijk, “A Squeezed Out Lemon Peel”. Abraham Kuypers on Modernism’, *Church History and Religious Culture* XCI.3 (2011), 397-413. Also published in: Kenis and Van der Wall (eds.), *Religious Modernism in the Low Countries*, 189-203.

<sup>8</sup> “...fata morgana...”; “...bestrijding van het Christendom...”; “...dat het alle werkelijkheid mist...”; “...ketterij...”; “...tegenvoeter eer dan vrucht van het Protestantisme...”; “...zelfbegoocheling...”; “...armoe aan vormingsvermogen...”; “...hun God is een abstractie...”; “...aan hun gebed de bede ontbreekt...”; “...geen werkelijk ideaal...” Quoted from: Kuypers, *Het modernisme*, 7, 8, 12, 17, 27, 28, 32, 34, 48.

<sup>9</sup> J.I. Doedes, *Modern of apostolisch Christendom? Toespraak gehouden bij de aanvang der academische werkzaamheden na de groote vacantie, den 18<sup>en</sup> September 1860* (Utrecht 1860); J. Cramer, *De illusie der moderne richting. Een woord naar aanleiding van de jongsten strijd tusschen prof. J.H. Scholten en dr. A. Pierson* (Amsterdam 1867).

<sup>10</sup> “Het modernisme geeft den menschen [...] steenen voor brood. Het kerkelijk leven is door het modernisme verwoest.” Quoted from: J.J. Timmer, ‘Moet onze evangelisatiearbeid worden stopgezet?’, *De Waarheidsvriend* XXII.33 (17 July 1931), 2.

“the reality of God’s holy holiness.”<sup>11</sup> Although not all orthodox denunciations of modernism were as harsh as the ones quoted here, and although orthodox Protestant theology was, as modern theologians tried to substantiate, not completely immune to modernist theological research,<sup>12</sup> the images orthodox Protestants had of the modernist movement were without exception condemnatory.<sup>13</sup>

Which characterisation did modernists set against those negative orthodox stereotypes? What was, in other words, their self-image? As explained in the introductory and second chapters, first-generation modernists self-assuredly presented themselves as the standard-bearers of a second Reformation, which would purge the church of all elements reminiscent of an outmoded supernaturalistic world view and speed up the pace in which society was going towards the ultimate completion of the kingdom of God. Yet, saying why contemporary church life and social life were deficient was one thing, devising and bringing about thorough reforms was another. This, as the central argument of this study goes, is what modernists failed to do.

Of course, it is obvious to state that irreconcilable differences of opinions and a weak level of organisation were responsible for that, but there was a deeper cause. As this chapter substantiates, there was a structural sense of uncertainty – uncertainty about what the defining

<sup>11</sup> “Alle modernisme mist een God, wiens heilige heiligheid volle realiteit is.” Quoted from: G. Wisse, *Christus-prediking bij het modernisme: een critische beschouwing van derzelve aard en motiveering. Rede bij de overdracht van het rectoraat aan de Theologische School der Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerk te Apeldoorn, op dinsdag 18 September 1934 gehouden* (Utrecht 1934), 33.

<sup>12</sup> Attempts modern theologians made to substantiate this are dealt with below.

<sup>13</sup> In the 1860s and early 1870s, several brochures were published in orthodox circles in which modern theology and the modernist movement were accused of demolishing Christianity, including: [Huet], *Wenken opzigtelijk moderne theologie*; J.I. Doedes, *De zoogenaamde moderne theologie eenigszins toegelicht* (Utrecht 1861); J. Douwes, Jr., *Het beginsel der moderne theologie, zooals het is voorgesteld door een van hare nieuwste woordvoerders* (Groningen 1861); N. van der Tuuk, “*Wat de moderne theologie leert*”. *Een woord van waarschuwing aan de gemeente* (Groningen 1861); H.R. Warmolts, *Wat de moderne theologie leert* [series of seven letters] (Groningen 1861-1862); Johannes, *Drie vragen. 1. Aan de Hervormde Gemeente in het algemeen. 2. Aan de predikers der moderne theologie in het bijzonder. 3. Aan de leeraars, die vasthouden aan het Evangelie der Schriften* (Zwolle 1862); O.J. Quintus, *Groote bezwaren tegen de moderne theologie voor de Nederlandsche hervormde predikanten en hunne kerkgemeenten* (Groningen 1862); Een lid van de Ecclesia pressa, *De moderne theologie voor het volk verklaard. Een woord door de Luthersche beweging, na het beroep van ds. Loman, van Vlissingen, uitgelokt* (Amsterdam 1863); P. Hofstede de Groot and C.H. van Herwerden, *Over moderne theologie. Mededeelingen en beschouwingen omtrent eenige van hare belangrijkste voortbrengselen* (Groningen 1863); H.G. Gonggrijp, *Is de uitlegging van het Evangelie, volgens de moderne rigting, geschikt voor de behoeften van het hart?* (Franeker 1864); J. de Liefde, *Waarschijnlijkheid of zekerheid? Een woord naar aanleiding der jongste openbaring op het gebied der moderne theologie* (Utrecht 1864); P. Hofstede de Groot, *De vraag: Waarom leggen verscheidene predikanten der moderne rigting hunne bediening neder? beantwoord door eenige der beroemdste godgeleerden van die rigting* (Groningen 1865); A. van der Linde, *Het Nijmeegsch protest. Een strijdschrift tegen de moderne theologie* (Utrecht 1865); *De moderneren aan de pols gevoeld* (Arnhem 1866); Cramer, *De illusie der moderne richting*; B.C. Felix, *Brieven aan een burgerman over en tegen de moderne rigting* (Amsterdam 1868); P. Holkema, *De zwakheid en onhoudbaarheid van de bewijisvoering der moderneren op het Christologisch standpunt tegenover de kracht van het Evangelisch geloof. Eene voorlezing* (Joure [1868]); *Proeve hoe de moderne theologie machtig is, om af te breken en onmachtig, om op te bouwen, gegeven in het verhaal van het aftreden van de heeren J.W. Straatman en C. Corver, als predikanten der Doopsgezinde gemeente te Groningen, in den herfst van 1867* (Utrecht 1868); *Komen de leeringen van moderneren overeen, met hetgeen God, in zijn woord, zegt?* (Wageningen 1869); Hofstede de Groot, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*; H.D. Pfann, *Openbaar en vrijmoedig getuigenis tegen de overheersching der moderneren in de Evangelisch-Luthersche gemeente te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1870); Kuypers, *Het modernisme*; A.W. van Bergen, *Het modernisme gewogen, maar te licht bevonden. Een woord naar aanleiding der brochure van den hoogleraar jonkhr. mr. J. de Bosch Kemper, getiteld “Het toezicht op de Evangelieprediking door kerkbesturen”* (Amsterdam 1873); L.C. Lentz, *Heeft de moderne rigting aanspraak op kerkelijke wettiging? Advies naar aanleiding van jonkhr. J. de Bosch Kemper’s voordragt en voorstel in de Nederl. Ev. Luth. synode, toegelicht door het geschrift “Het toezicht op de Evangelieprediking door kerkbesturen”* (Amsterdam 1873).

characteristics of modernism were – hidden behind the façade of the self-proclaimed ‘second Reformation’. Modernists therefore had difficulty in defining themselves other than as everything their orthodox adversaries were not. However, such characterisations were rather problematic; on the one hand because the dichotomy between modernism and orthodoxy was not as self-evident as it seemed, and on the other hand because a growing number of modernists came to see the image of modernism as a mere negation of orthodoxy as objectionable. Why was this so? And why did the term ‘*modern*’ gradually come to be replaced by ‘*vrijzinnig*’? In historiography, this trend is noticed, but usually not problematised. Yet, as this chapter puts forward, it ought to be, as the expectations due to which modernists came to prefer the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ were not always the same and did not all materialise. Reflecting upon the questions and issues raised here is vital to understanding the development of the modernist movement. The way modernists looked at themselves has stamped their thoughts and actions, analysed in chapters 4 and 5, regarding a reform of church life.

## 2. The ‘True Heirs to the Reformation’

The abovementioned case of Kuyper’s characterisation of liberal Protestants as ‘Chinese in Europe’ is not only interesting in itself, exemplifying the negative stereotypes of modernists circulating in orthodox circles. Van Doorn’s reaction to it demonstrates in a broader sense two particularities of the way in which modernists generally dealt with antipathetic orthodox stereotypes.

First, in his response to Kuyper, Van Doorn used a rhetorical skill modernists often used in discussions with orthodox: he retorted the charge on the accuser. To Kuyper’s depiction of modernism as a ‘fata morgana’, modernist Reformed minister G. van Gorkom (1833-1905) responded in a similar way. Meticulously refuting every argument Kuyper used to substantiate his claim that modernism was just as illusory as a fata morgana, Van Gorkom implied that orthodoxy was in fact the true delusion. Just as Kuyper, he borrowed an Italian term to make his point: Van Doorn compared Kuyper’s attempt to preserve untenable orthodox articles of faith to a “*salto mortale*.”<sup>14</sup> Someone who performs such a manoeuvre, in this case Kuyper, initially *thinks* he is going to succeed, but will ultimately crash. Hence, he fools himself, just as someone who mistakenly believes that a fata morgana is real.

Second, while denying that modernism fitted Kuyper’s description, Van Doorn did not specify how modernism should be properly defined. He only *negated* the profile Kuyper sketched. Portraying modernists as ‘Chinese in Europe’ was wrong, but what kind of image should be set against it? Giving a self-definition proved to be arduous, something with which the modernist movement continued to struggle.

When orthodox Protestants tried to define modernists, they commonly defined these as their exact opposites. They saw themselves as followers of true belief, while modernists were unbelievers. They tried to build a flourishing church life, whereas modernists demolished it. Although orthodox used different, more depreciatory terms – ‘unbelievers’, ‘demolishers’, etc. –, modernists generally defined themselves as the opposites of orthodoxy as well. Consider, for

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted from: G. van Gorkom, ‘Dr. Kuyper en het modernisme’, *Los en Vast* VI (1871), 293-394, there 393. See also: B.R. Evenhuis, *Ook dat was Amsterdam* V. *De kerk der hervorming in de negentiende eeuw: de strijd voor kerkherstel* (Baarn 1978), 306-307.

example, the characterisation that L.W.E. Rauwenhoff gave to the movement to which he belonged in 1871. Admitting that it was hard to give an adequate description of a movement as diverse as the modernist one, he pictured it as being against conventional theology, against a verbatim interpretation of Scripture, a reversal of traditional Protestant consciousness, a break with tradition, against the sacramental status of baptism and confirmation, against supernaturalism and against the old concept of the church as the preserver of a particular confession of faith.<sup>15</sup> Rauwenhoff thus focused on what modernism was *not*, as other modernists did. W. Zaalberg, to name just one of the latter, could only elucidate the goal of the NPB, the mainstay of the modernist movement, in negative terms. In an 1874 brochure, he explained that the aim of the association to further the free development of religious life was supposed to be read as a call to counteract “the Protestant ecclesial orthodoxy” and those “men of letters, aristocrats of the spirit, leading men in our society” who reasoned that every religious faith was a delusion. It was perfectly clear what the NPB was against. However, Zaalberg failed to make clear how the NPB wanted to shape religious life once confessionism and religious indifference would be defeated – a defeat about which he, and first-generation modernists in general, had no doubt. The modernists organised in the NPB, he admitted, were only the harbingers of a reformation, not actual reformers. After all, “we do not yet know to give expression to the words, the form in which free religious life should take a clearly noticeable, awe-inspiring shape. [...] The men and women who can do that, the reformers of society and church, will stand on our shoulders.”<sup>16</sup> Rauwenhoff and Zaalberg thus acknowledged that at that moment, modernism was merely – and, what is more, could only be – a negation of orthodoxy, as modernists had not yet found new terms, concepts and rituals, and a new organisation in which the religion of the future could find expression. Yet Rauwenhoff and Zaalberg were convinced that they would eventually succeed in finding these new forms.

Modernists’ negation of orthodoxy not only consisted of refutations of certain conceptions of God and of the idea that the church should stick to a certain confession of faith. It also entailed a contradiction of claims confessionists made regarding their own identity.<sup>17</sup> Contrasting themselves with modernists, orthodox Protestants looked at themselves as being ‘*Schriftgetrouw*’, accepting that the Bible is about historical facts and hence not challenging its divine inspiration. Modernists, in turn, admitted that they did not regard all biblical texts to be literally true, but that they were in fact, *precisely because of that*, more faithful to Scripture than their orthodox adversaries. As the lectures held in local NPB branches in the 1870s and early 1880s evince, this modernist counterclaim was one of the most popular topics of conversation. In the NPB branch in Drachten, for instance, Dutch Reformed minister O. Geerts (1840-1880) lectured in 1877 that orthodoxy deluded itself by preserving a false image of Jesus as a miracle

<sup>15</sup> L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, *Geschiedenis van het protestantisme III. Van het midden der achttiende eeuw tot op onze tijd* (Haarlem 1871), 363-381.

<sup>16</sup> “...de protestantsch-kerkelijke orthodoxie...”; “...de geletterden [...], de aristocratie der geesten [...], [de] toongevers onzer maatschappij...”; “Wij zijn de hervormers nog niet. Want wij weten het woord, den vorm nog niet uit te drukken waarin het vrije godsdienstige leven een duidelijk waarneembare ontzag-inboezemende gestalte moet verkrijgen. Wij bereiden slechts de hervorming voor. Op onze schouders zullen ze komen te staan, de mannen en vrouwen die dat kunnen, de hervormers van samenleving en kerk.” Quoted from: Zaalberg, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenbond*, 4, 6-7, 16.

<sup>17</sup> A comparison between modernism and orthodoxy is given in: C. Augustijn, ‘Kerk en godsdienst 1870-1890’, in: Bakker et al. (eds.), *De Doleantie van 1886*, 41-75, there 52-62, 67-68.

maker, whereas modern theologians shed more light upon who Jesus truly was.<sup>18</sup> A year later, Mennonite minister I.H. Boeke (1846-1913) exclaimed in Delden that “Jesus without miracles is more magnificent than with miracles,” as those miracles “are obstacles in the way that leads to appreciation of Jesus and of the scriptures bearing witness to him.”<sup>19</sup> Dutch Reformed minister H.A. van der Meulen (1847-1929) told his audience in Dokkum in 1880 that modernists had more right to accuse orthodox Protestants of “pulverisation of the Bible” than vice versa. Those who were unwilling to acknowledge that a supernaturalist world view was no longer tenable, he argued, intentionally withstand the truth.<sup>20</sup> In 1884, to name a last example, Dutch Reformed minister A.A. van Meurs (1842-1908) similarly contended in the NPB branch of Drimmelen-Geertruidenberg that only those who integrated scientific insights into their faith could really understand biblical texts.<sup>21</sup> Modernists, in sum, felt that a historical-critical approach to the Bible resulted in a ‘purer’ kind of Christianity and would thereby ultimately end theological quarrels revolving around the question of how Scriptural passages should be interpreted. For them, the Bible did not have meaning because God had supposedly verbally inspired it, but because, and only insofar as, it plucked at their heart strings.<sup>22</sup>

In the 1880s, however, dissatisfaction with the oppositional character of modernism as the negation of orthodoxy began to increase. Some felt that, now that the NPB had celebrated its tenth anniversary, the time had come for modernists to shift their focus from deconstruction to construction – that is, to actively try to find the new terms, concepts, rituals and new organisation that would enable modernism, as Rauwenhoff, Zaalberg and others had prophesied in the 1870s, to develop into the religion of the future.<sup>23</sup> This proved to be much harder than negating orthodoxy. As chapter 4 indicates, modernists answered the question of how church life should be organised in various ways. There was no such thing as a modernist ‘blueprint’ of church reform similar to,

<sup>18</sup> [O. Geerts in:] ‘Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsch Protestantenvbond – Drachten’, *De Hervorming* 1877-11 (17 March 1877), 2.

<sup>19</sup> “Jezus zonder wonderen is grooter dan met wonderen.”; “...struikelblokken op den weg tot waardeering van Jezus en van de schriften die van hem getuigen.” Quoted from: [I.H. Boeke in:] ‘Nederlandsch Protestantenvbond – Delden’, *Ibid.* 1878-15 (13 April 1878), 2 [Boeke is erroneously referred to as ‘J.H. Boeke’].

<sup>20</sup> “...Bijbelvergruizing...” Quoted from: [H.A. van der Meulen in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Dokkum’, *Ibid.* 1880-13 (27 March 1880), 50. Van der Meulen gave the same lecture in Rauwerderhem later that year. See: [H.A. van der Meulen in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Rauwerderhem en omstreken’, *Ibid.* 1880-48 (27 November 1880), 190.

<sup>21</sup> [A.A. van Meurs in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Drimmelen-Geertruidenberg’, *Ibid.* 1884-09 (1 March 1884), 36.

<sup>22</sup> See also: J.G.L. Nolst Trenité, ‘Bedenkingen’, *Ibid.* 1874-18 (30 April 1874), 2-3, there 3; ‘Pers-kout’, *Ibid.* 1874-27 (2 July 1874), 3; W.C. van Manen, ‘Misplaatste verbazing’, *Ibid.* 1874-47 (19 November 1874), 2; B. Tideman Jz., ‘Een goed werk’, *Ibid.* 1876-01 (6 January 1876), 2-3; W.C. van Manen, ‘Onze leestafel – “Schets van de geschiedenis der Nieuw-Testamentische letterkunde”’, *Ibid.* 1877-06 (10 February 1877), 3; E. Snellen, ‘Bijbelwaardeering’, *Onze Godsdienstprediking* II.4 (1878), 53-67; ‘Vastheid’, *De Hervorming* 1881-26 (2 July 1881), 101-102; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Bijbelwaardeering’, *Ibid.* 1883-08 (24 February 1883), 29; E. Snellen, ‘Alles is het uwe’, *Ibid.* 1884-24 (14 June 1884), 95-96; ‘Binnenland – De nieuwe vertaling van het Oude Testament’, *Ibid.* 1884-35 (30 August 1884), 140; ‘De godzaligheid tot alle dingen nut?’, *Ibid.* 1884-50 (13 December 1884), 199. In 1885, the editors of *De Protestant* accordingly argued that the Bible was the best weapon with which Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestant could be counterattacked. See: T., ‘De Bijbel tegenover Rome en Dordt’, *De Protestant* III.47 (21 November 1885), 2-3.

<sup>23</sup> E.g.: ‘Vóór den zevenden Protestantendag’, *De Hervorming* 1879-43 (25 October 1879), 169-170, there 169; [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] ‘De openbare vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1883-46 (17 November 1883), 182-183; L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, ‘Onze leestafel – “Werken en wachten”’, *Ibid.* 1883-48 (1 December 1883), 193; J.J. van Hille, ‘De moderne richting en de inwendige zending’, *Ibid.* 1885-48 (28 November 1885), 190; G.J.D. Mounier, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1886-34 (21 August 1886), 138; [J.T. Tenthoff in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Afd. St.-Annaparochie’, *Ibid.* 1888-16 (21 April 1888), 62.

for example, the detailed Kuyparian reform scheme as set down in the 1883 *Tractaat van de Reformatie der Kerken* (*Treatise of the Reformation of the Churches*).<sup>24</sup>

Moreover, modernists were confronted with a phenomenon playing into the hands of orthodoxy. From the mid-1860s to the early 1880s, growing religious doubt caused several modernist ministers to leave their office. Some of them only left the church without distancing themselves from the modernist movement, such as A.G. van Hamel and M.A.N. Rovers in the late 1870s, but most did become entirely estranged from liberal Protestantism. This last category of ministers included A. Pierson and C. Busken Huet, who both resigned in the 1860s, and F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, who left the church in 1879. Orthodox Protestants interpreted abdications such as these as a confirmation of their claim that modernism was solely a destructive force, ultimately leading to total unbelief.<sup>25</sup> Modernists were fully aware of this and consequently responded to ministers leaving the church with little appreciation.<sup>26</sup> For example, when J.A. Tours (1843-1918), at the time a Dutch Reformed minister in Deventer, decided to resign in 1883, one ‘layman’ wrote in *De Hervorming* that Kuypers, personifying orthodoxy, would claim this as yet another victory in his crusade against modernism. Even when they could no longer believe in the historicity of Jesus, as long as they still shared the high-principled ethics laid down in the Bible, modernist ministers had the moral *duty* to remain at their posts and to continue their resistance against Kuypers’ lust for supreme power. In this layman’s eyes, Tours was a deserter, a soldier who left the battlefield untimely.<sup>27</sup>

Orthodox Protestants substantiated their claim to be the true heirs of Luther, Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) and Calvin by stressing that they professed the same articles of faith as these theologians had done in the sixteenth century. Nineteenth-century modernist Protestants, on the contrary, claimed the same, albeit justified in a different way. In their eyes, the advance of modernism was the breakthrough of a second Reformation, the completion of the work that the Reformers had started in the sixteenth century. Although the Reformers’ thoughts and actions were condemnable in many cases, modernists of the nineteenth century, to quote Mosselmans and Van Gilse, felt to share their inner motive to defend “the imperative need of the mind and the heart against authority.” In an attempt to legitimise their undermining of the misappropriated authority of the Church of Rome, the Reformers had upheld the primacy of Scripture, thereby simply replacing one authority by another. Nonetheless, even though its initiators had in due course recoiled from the ultimate consequence of their own revolt against the restraint of

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<sup>24</sup> A. Kuypers, *Tractaat van de reformatie der kerken, aan de zonen der Reformatie hier te lande op Luther’s vierde eeuwfeest aangeboden* (Amsterdam 1883); Harinck and Winkeler, ‘De negentiende eeuw’, 695.

<sup>25</sup> Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 81-82.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-90.

<sup>27</sup> Een moderne leek, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Dr. J.A. Tours, thans em. predikant, en zijn uittreden als evangeliedienaar der Ned. Hervormde Kerk’, *De Hervorming* 1883-21 (26 May 1883), 83. In response, Tours wrote that this layman did not do justice to his sincere religious doubts: “Our writer thinks that everyone who ‘leaves the church arbitrarily, commits an offence, if only because this would serve the interests of Kuypers and his supporters.’ He presents Dr Kuypers as the ultimate bogeyman. One would come to think that the church is an *ecclesia militans* (church militant), losing its right to exist as soon as the feared Kuypers and his followers disappear.” (“Onze schrijver [...] oordeelt eindelijk, dat ‘wie willekeurig heengaat, verkeerd handelt, al was het alleen omdat Kuypers c.s. er door meenen, dat de Kerk eene *ecclesia militans* (strijdende Kerk) is en haar reden van bestaan grootendeels zou verliezen, indien de gevreesde Kuypers met zijn aanhang verdween.”) Quoted from: J.A. Tours, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Repliek’, *Ibid.* 1883-22 (2 June 1883), 87-88, there 88. See also: J.A. Tours, *Twee toespraken, ter rechtvaardiging van het nederleggen zijner betrekking* (Deventer 1883).



conscience, the Reformation itself had started as a return to the “old Christian ideal, championed by Jesus himself,” being the realisation of God’s Kingdom on earth. The modernist movement, Mosselmans and Van Gilse accentuated, cherished the same ideal.<sup>28</sup>

Afterwards, both in *De Hervorming* and NPB meetings, similar statements were repeatedly made.<sup>29</sup> All of them were based on the same rationale: a true Protestant does not uncompromisingly adhere to certain customs, formulations and images, but thinks and acts in the same *spirit* as the sixteenth-century Reformers – that is to say, in the same spirit as *some* of them. Other than Luther and Zwingli, Calvin met with considerably less sympathy in the modernist movement. Believing that his conscience forced him to eradicate teachings he considered to be false, Calvin had conducted a genuine reign of terror in Geneva in the mid-sixteenth century. In doing so, he had suppressed the right of every individual to have and express a personal religious conviction. Calvin had therefore not been a *true* advocate of the freedom of conscience, as some modernists argued. According to the latter, Calvin had possessed less of the ‘Protestant spirit’ than other Reformers.<sup>30</sup>

Nineteenth-century modernists considered freedom of conscience to be the core principle of Christianity ‘as Jesus of Nazareth intended it’. Since Protestantism had come into existence as a return to this ‘pure’ Christianity, and since modernism was, in the eyes of its adherents, the truest representative of Protestantism, modernists saw the championing of the freedom of conscience as the central and defining element of their movement. However, this claim was problematic for several reasons.

<sup>28</sup> “...de onafwijsbare behoefte van hoofd en hart tegenover de autoriteit...”; “...het oud-christelijk ideaal, het grootsch ontwerp van Jezus zelf...” Quoted from: [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], ‘Nieuwjaarsgroet’, *De Hervorming* 1873-01 (2 January 1873), 1-2, there 1. In 1871, Doedes had denied the claim of the NPB to represent ‘true’ Protestantism. The NPB, Doedes argued, confused the word ‘Protestant’ with ‘protesting’. Protestantism was all about accepting Jesus Christ as Saviour and the Bible as the Word of God, and making sure that the church would not teach anything in conflict with that, which was exactly against which the NPB protested. See: J.I. Doedes, ‘Het onderscheid tusschen protestant-zijn en protesteeren. Noodzakelijke herinnering met het oog op Protestantenvereenigingen en Protestantenvonden van modernen’, *Kerkelijke Bijdragen* II (1871), 174-181.

<sup>29</sup> E.g.: ‘Adressen aan de synode der Ned. Herv. Kerk’, appendix to *De Hervorming* 1879-25 (21 June 1879), 101; [C. Schwarz], ‘Buitenland – De Deutsche Protestantendag te Gotha’, *Ibid.* 1880-24 (12 June 1880), 95; [A.J. Oort in:] E. Snellen, ‘Erasmus en Luther’, *Ibid.* 1880-47 (20 November 1880), 186; J.A. Böhringer, ‘Toespraak van den heer J.A. Böhringer in de godsdienstoefening bij gelegenheid van de Protestantendag te Deventer’, *Ibid.* 1889-43 (26 October 1889), 169-170, there 170; H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Rede van dr. H.Y. Groenewegen’, *Ibid.* 1894-44 (3 November 1894), 173-174, there 174; B.W. Colenbrander, ‘Twee lijnrecht tegenover elkaar staande beginselen’, *Ibid.* 1896-29 (18 July 1896), 113-114, there 114.

<sup>30</sup> E.g.: W. Zaalberg, ‘Protestantsche bijdrage’, *Ibid.* 1876-05 (3 February 1876), 1-2; E. Snellen, ‘Het wezen der Hervorming’, *Ibid.* 1880-44 (30 October 1880), 173; J.W.G. van Haarst, ‘De modernen en het Lutherfeest’, *Ibid.* 1883-41 (13 October 1883), 161-162, there 162; L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, ‘Maarten Luther’, *Ibid.* 1883-45 (10 November 1883), 177; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Is Luther onze man?’, *Ibid.* 1883-45 (10 November 1883), 177-178; ‘De Nederlandsche Reformatie’, *De Protestant* I.49 (8 December 1883), 1-2, there 1; I.50 (15 December 1883), 1-2; A. Kuenen, ‘Huldreich Zwingli’, *De Hervorming* 1883-52 (29 December 1883), 209; W.C. van Manen, ‘Holland en Zwingli’, *Ibid.* 1883-52 (29 December 1883), 211-212; S.K. Bakker, ‘Wij, calvinisten?’, *Ibid.* 1909-29 (17 July 1909), 226-227; C. de Jongh, ‘Godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven – Psychologische verklaring van orthodoxie’, *Ibid.* 1924-25 (21 June 1924), 195-197, there 196; P.J. Dijkman, “‘Of wij niet moeten komen tot een ziel’”. Vrijzinnige protestanten en de Reformatie-herdenking van 1917”, in: H.J. Paul, B.T. Wallet and G. Harinck (eds.), *De Reformatie-herdenking van 1917. Historische beeldvorming en religieuze identiteitspolitiek in Nederland* (Zoetermeer 2004), 120-139. In 1918, M.C. van Mourik Broekman implied that modernists’ rather unfavourable image of Calvin was partly a reaction to the favourable image of Calvin in orthodox Protestant circles; he stated that Calvin was actually way more liberal than orthodox Protestants claimed. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing’, *De Hervorming* 1918-45 (9 November 1918), 177-178, there 177.

First, ‘freedom of conscience’ was not seen as the sole principle of modernism, but as one of many ‘modernist principles’. What these other ‘principles’ were remained, however, rather vague. When orators at NPB meetings or article writers in *De Hervorming* used the term ‘modernist principles’ – which they frequently did –, they did not give any specification of this term and apparently assumed that the people they addressed knew what they meant. As it was not specified, the expression ‘modernist principles’ was used as a conceptual frame of reference, with which all modernists could identify. As such, adherence to ‘modernist principles’ served as a communal identity marker for modernists, while the term itself was, to a large extent, a ‘hollow concept’, to be given concrete meaning by every individual modernist himself.<sup>31</sup>

Second, upholding the freedom of conscience as the core principle of modernism was problematic, as non-modernists considered this to be one of *their* fundamental principles as well. The same goes for the aim of the NPB to advance a free development of religious life. No non-modernist would claim to be against the freedom of conscience or the free development of religious life. On the contrary, Kuyper, to take him yet again as an example, consistently stressed to step into breach for the freedom of conscience.<sup>32</sup> Whereas modernists’ plea for an absolute liberty of conscience went hand in hand with a plea for a ‘broad church’, Kuyperians stated that *their* conscience forbade them to tolerate liberal religious views, or to coexist with liberals within the same church denomination. As long as the Dutch Reformed Church did not stand up against latitudinarianism, their conscience was violated.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, in the eyes of the most militantly orthodox Protestants, modernism was not a champion of the liberty of conscience, but an infringement thereof.<sup>34</sup> Modernism salved people’s conscience with ‘false’ teachings and caused religious doubt, leading people away from true faith. Its presence in church life hence hindered the free development of genuine religious life.<sup>35</sup> Freethinkers made similar

<sup>31</sup> In his biography of Abraham Kuyper, Koch suggests that the term ‘*gereformeerde beginselen*’ (‘Reformed principles’), used as a frame of reference and an identity marker in neo-Calvinist circles, was such a ‘hollow concept’ as well. Whereas it remained unclear which principles other than the principle of liberty of conscience belonged to the ‘modernist principles’, there was some sort of consensus among neo-Calvinists as to which concepts collectively formed the ‘Reformed principles’, for instance the principles of ‘sphere sovereignty’, ‘common grace’ and the ‘anti-thesis’. Yet, the *content* of these ‘principles’ was not unambiguously defined. Even Kuyper himself used different definitions as he pleased. See: Koch, *Abraham Kuyper*, 380-381, 386, 388; H.J. Paul, ‘Gereformeerde beginselen’, in: Harinck, Paul and Wallet (eds.), *Het gereformeerde geheugen*, 293-305.

<sup>32</sup> E.g.: A. Kuyper, ‘Partijvorming en beginselstrijd’, *De Standaard* I.1 (1 April 1872), 1; A. Kuyper, *Ons program* (Amsterdam [1879] 1880), 84-89; A. Kuyper, *Maranatha. Rede ter inleiding van de deputatenvergadering, gehouden te Utrecht op 12 Mei 1891* (Amsterdam 1891), 15, 19.

<sup>33</sup> E.g.: A. Kuyper, ‘Geworteld en gegrond.’ *De kerk als organisme en instituut. Intreërede, uitgesproken in de Nieuwe Kerk te Amsterdam, 10 augustus 1870* (Amsterdam [1870]), 19-21; A. Kuyper, *Het dreigend conflict. Memorie van de gevolmachtigde commissie uit den Amsterdamsche kerkeraad ter voorlichting der gemeente in zake de attesten* (Amsterdam 1886), 9-10; J.J.A. Ploos van Amstel, *De Amsterdamsche kwestie eenvoudig toegelicht* (Leeuwarden 1886), 5-6.

<sup>34</sup> J.H. Gunning, Jr. (1829-1905), who was only moderately orthodox and felt that no efforts should be made to proactively chase modernists out of the Dutch Reformed Church, argued that modernists could only claim to be the true Protestants because their conscience was ‘asleep’. As a result, they did not recognise that their theological views contradicted the very essence of Christianity: salvation through Christ. See: J.H. Gunning, Jr., ‘Advies betreffende den Protestantenvoerbond’, *Stemmen voor Waarheid en Vrede* XIV (1877), 537-557, there 554-556.

<sup>35</sup> E.g.: A. Kuyper, *Het modernisme*, 33-39. One of the fiercest opponents of the modernist movement, emphasising the ‘devastating’ consequences modernism exerted on religious life, was the *Wageningen Weekblad* (*Wageningen Weekly*). The comments of this magazine’s editor, S.H. Buytendijk (1820-1910), were systematically countered in *De Hervorming*. E.g.: ‘Feu sacré’, *De Hervorming* 1874-36 (3 September 1874), 1-2, there 1; ‘Kerkeraad of weesvoogden?’, *Ibid.* 1875-49 (9 December 1875), 2; F.A., ‘Een woord op zijn pas’, *Ibid.* 1876-37 (14 September 1876), 1-2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.] ‘Binnenland – Liever turksch dan modern’, *Ibid.* 1877-05 (3 February 1877), 2-3; J.

comments. According to them, modernists treated the existence of a Supreme Being or a spiritual realm as a postulate, whereas this ‘truth’ was no irrefutable outcome of rational, scientific thinking. Consequently, modernists salved their conscience and hindered the free dissemination of the Truth by propagating their unsubstantiated religious views.<sup>36</sup> Leaving the legitimacy of such comments out of account, the mere fact that non-modernists regarded the advocacy of the liberty of conscience as one of their features as well made modernists’ self-image rather problematic. Nineteenth-century modernists did not recognise this problem, as to them it was clear: non-modernists could claim to embrace the freedom of conscience as a principle, but the only ones who truly respected the individual conscience were modernists themselves.<sup>37</sup>

Third, modernists claimed to be the sole legitimate champions of the freedom of conscience, but it can be questioned whether they themselves stuck to the definition they gave of this principle in all circumstances. How tolerant was it to try to change the Dutch Reformed Church in such a way that confessionalists could simply no longer stay in this denomination without harming their conscience?<sup>38</sup> In some congregations with a modernist majority, no concessions were made to the orthodox minority. By means of justification, modernists stated that they suffered from the same ill-treatment in many orthodox-ruled congregations; they had to act likewise in order not to enable confessionalists to become the dominant group in the Dutch Reformed Church as a whole.<sup>39</sup> There was something to that, but it can hardly be called a

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Knappert, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-30 (28 July 1877), 4; 1877-35 (1 September 1877), 4; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Vruchten van het modernisme’, *Ibid.* 1881-02 (15 January 1881), 6; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Goed lezen’, *Ibid.* 1881-46 (19 November 1881), 187; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – “In het kamp der modernen wilt gij noch ik aankomen”’, *Ibid.* 1883-19 (12 May 1883), 74-75; V.D., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1886-52 (25 December 1886), 210; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Zus en zoo’, *Ibid.* 1887-36 (3 September 1887), 143.

<sup>36</sup> H.U. Meyboom, ‘Het doel van het godsdienstonderwijs’, *Ibid.* 1878-22 (1 June 1878), 1-2, there 1; F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, ‘De kerk en de vrije gedachte’, *De Dageraad* III/1 (1881/1882), 11-13; P.C.F. Frowein, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Het bankroet van het modernisme’, *Ibid.* I/1 (1880/1881), 141-144, 154-158; P.C.F. Frowein, ‘Een stem uit de Vrije Gemeente’, *Ibid.* I/2 (1880/1881), 54-59; P.C.F. Frowein, ‘De vrije gedachte en de Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam’, *Ibid.* V/1 (1883/1884), 382-392, 459-470; H.F.A.P., ‘Vrije-Gemeente-eigenaardigheden’, *Ibid.* XI (1889-1890), 743-749.

<sup>37</sup> E.g.: ‘Binnenland – Na achtereenvolgens’, *De Hervorming* 1874-15 (9 April 1874), 3; [J. van Gilse], ‘Met het oog op de aanstaande verkiezingen’, *Ibid.* 1875-22 (3 June 1875), 1; I. Hooykaas, ‘Een veeg teken’, *Ibid.* 1876-16 (20 April 1876), 1-2, there 2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Aanmatiging in de Ned. Herv. Kerk’, *Ibid.* 1883-24 (16 June 1883), 94.

<sup>38</sup> A question Ph.R. Hugenholtz also raised in early 1875. See: Ph.R. Hugenholtz, ‘Het kerkelijk vraagstuk’, *Ibid.* 1875-01 (7 January 1875), 1-2. Other modernists waved this question aside, as in their eyes, orthodox were no *true* Protestants and hence could not legitimately claim to have the exclusive right to be in the Dutch Reformed Church. Moreover, if doctrinal freedom were to be laid down in the regulations of the Dutch Reformed Church, orthodox would not be *forced*, but would only *feel* compelled to leave. Orthodox, on the other hand, did try to chase modernists away. See: W. de Meijer, ‘Open brief aan ds. Ph.R. Hugenholtz’, *Ibid.* 1875-02 (4 January 1875), 1; 1875-03 (21 January 1875), 1-2; W. Zaalberg, ‘Nous maintiendrons’, *Ibid.* 1875-04 (28 January 1875), 1-3; Ph.R. Hugenholtz, ‘Aan den heer W. de Meijer’, *Ibid.* 1875-06 (11 February 1875), 1-2. Orthodox Reformed minister H.V. Hogerzeil (1839-1907) implied that modernists were less tolerant than orthodox Protestants: the latter at least made an effort to fathom modernists’ views by reading modernist magazines, while modernists simply brushed aside orthodox views in advance. See: H.V. Hogerzeil, *Naar de Remonstrantsche Broederschap? Godsdienstige volkslezing, gehouden 8 Maart 1878 in het Nuts-Gebouw* (Arnhem 1878), 30.

<sup>39</sup> W. Zaalberg, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1877-15 (14 April 1877), 4; J.W. Lieftinck, Sr., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-17 (28 April 1877), 4; W. Zaalberg, ‘Kerkelijke kwestie – Het synodaal verzoek’, *Ibid.* 1884-38 (20 September 1884), 152-153, there 153; ‘Binnenland – De moderne hervormden te Haarlem’, *Ibid.* 1884-39 (27 September 1884), 156; W. Zaalberg, ‘“Hoe kunnen wij op kerkelijk gebied overeenstemming brengen tusschen den plicht van verdraagzaamheid en trouw aan ons beginsel?”’, *Ibid.* 1885-20 (16 May 1885), 77-78; 1885-21 (23 May 1885), 82-83; A.C. Leendertz, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De Bijbel’, *Ibid.* 1896-06 (8 February 1896), 24.

conscientious thing to do. Moreover, although ‘freedom of conscience’ implied that respect should be paid to all sincere convictions, even to those that seemed absurd or delusional in modernist eyes, some modernists made no effort whatsoever to hide their disgust and contempt of orthodox theology. In 1876, for instance, in a brochure published by the Amsterdam-based, NPB-like *Vereeniging tot bevordering van zelfstandig godsdienstig leven* (Association for the Advancement of Independent Religious Life), it was stated that the modernist movement “is the only true movement in church life.”<sup>40</sup> B.A. van Doorn, who made himself known as the author of this statement in *De Hervorming*, explained that he meant to say that a modernist way of being religious “is the only way to worship the Supreme Being with awe, love and dedication.” In opposition to orthodoxy, Protestant modernism “is the only and hence the true way [...] to restore Jesus’s religion in its original plainness.”<sup>41</sup>

In the early modernist movement, it was generally believed that orthodoxy would ultimately die out, as it was supposed to be unable to satisfactorily respond to the challenges of the age to come.<sup>42</sup> This suggests that orthodox Protestants were less ‘modern’ than modernists as well as being unconcerned with the preservation of Christianity as a meaningful cultural and social force in the future. This was, however, a false impression. Kuyper, to continue using him by way of comparison with modernists, was not simply staunchly ‘anti-modern’; as said in the introductory chapter, he wanted to defend Calvinist orthodoxy by bringing it ‘in rapport’ with the present age. This was not just rhetoric; in his neo-Calvinist theology, he in fact redefined concepts coined by Calvin by drawing upon contemporary scientific and philosophical insights.<sup>43</sup> What is more, neo-Calvinists took full advantage of the opportunities that the modern age offered them. In the Netherlands, they were the first to found a national, centralised, mass political party in 1879, and made extensive use of mass media.

While neo-Calvinists were thus eager to manifest themselves as a monolithic bloc by making use of contemporary techniques that allowed them to establish mass organisations of their own, there was a good deal of hesitancy among modernists to institutionally join forces. The first chapter, dealing with the formation and first years of the NPB, has sufficiently shown this. The fear was that an organisation would call for unity in action and would hence pressure individuals to sacrifice their own thoughts for the sake of the collective, which would be a violation of the freedom of conscience. In an attempt to neutralise this potential threat, a clear distinction was made between a *movement* and a *party*. In *De Hervorming* and at NPB meetings,

<sup>40</sup> “...dat de nieuwe richting op kerkelijk gebied de eenig ware is.” Quoted from: J.E. Moltzer, *De moderne richting, verdedigd in haar godsdienstig, zedelijk, christelijk en Nederlandsch-hervormd karakter. Eene voorlezing* (Amsterdam 1876), 4.

<sup>41</sup> “...de eenige weg om het Hoogste Wezen met eerbied, liefde en toewijding te dienen.”; “...dat de nieuwe richting de eenige weg, en dus de ware is om [...] de godsdienst van Jezus tot zijne oorspronkelijke eenvoudigheid terug te voeren.” Quoted from: B.A. van Doorn, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1876-30 (27 July 1876), 3-4, there 3. See also: B.A. van Doorn, ‘Onfeilbaarheid’, *Ibid.* 1876-28 (13 July 1876), 2-3.

<sup>42</sup> E.g.: A.F. Mackenstien, ‘Kroniek’, *Ibid.* 1873-50 (11 December 1873), 1-2, there 1; A. Admiraal, ‘O, gij kleingeloovigen!’, *Ibid.* 1874-08 (19 February 1874), 1; H.Ph. de Kanter, “‘Het kerkelijk vraagstuk’”, *Ibid.* 1874-17 (23 April 1874), 3-4, there 4; [M.J. Mees in:] ‘Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1884-46 (15 November 1884), 183-185, there 185; [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] ‘De 15<sup>e</sup> algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1885-46 (14 November 1885), 181-182, there 182; A.S. Carpentier Alting, *De godsdienst der toekomst* (Leiden 1885), 225-226; F. Pijper, ‘De toekomst der vrijzinnige richting’, *De Hervorming* 1890-01 (4 January 1890), 1-2, there 2.

<sup>43</sup> As Harinck argues, “modernism and neo-Calvinism were products of the same cultural context.” Quoted from: G. Harinck, ‘Why Was Bavinck in Need of a Philosophy of Revelation?’, in: J. Bowlin (ed.), *The Kuyper Center Review II. Revelation and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids 2011), 27-42, there 35.

it was stressed over and over again that modernists formed a *movement*, having no clear boundaries and no goal other than to liberate people from all external pressures that hindered them from acquiring personal convictions about life. In practice, this meant that the modernist movement consisted of all people who identified themselves as ‘modernists’, regardless of their religious views. When, in 1877, NPB members protested against the membership of someone who claimed to have no religious conviction at all, it was decided that no one should be excluded.<sup>44</sup> If the person in question regarded himself to be a modernist and consequently wanted to be a member of the NPB, others did not have the right to reject him. As this case demonstrates, the term ‘modernist’ was not subjected to a thorough content-related reflection at the time. Rather, it was the self-designation of those Protestants who neither counted themselves among the orthodox nor among the *evangelischen*.

The relationship of the nineteenth-century modernist movement to these *evangelischen* was ambiguous. *Evangelischen* were willing to accept biblical criticism to a certain extent, but

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<sup>44</sup> The person against whose NPB membership objections were raised was H.C.J. Krijthe. In early 1877, Krijthe wrote in *De Hervorming* that he lacked the belief “in the personal God who is conscious of his own being, to whom account should be given” (“...den persoonlijken, zich zelf bewusten God, aan wien men verantwoording schuldig zoude zijn...”). He felt he was treated as a second-class NPB member, as the editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming* had published an article in which those who lacked such a belief were depicted as immoral. Quoted from: H.C.J. Krijthe, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1877-02 (13 January 1877), 3-4, there 3. (F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., replied not to know to which article Krijthe referred.) Several letters to the editor were written in reaction to Krijthe’s statement, all of which, with the exception of one (written by F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, with whom chapter 7 deals in more detail), questioned the legitimacy of Krijthe’s NPB membership. Later that year, Krijthe added fuel to the flames by accusing some of his opponents of clericalism and dogmatism. At the general NPB assembly, members of the NPB branches in The Hague and Gouda asked whether someone such as Krijthe should be excluded from NPB membership and, more generally, whether NPB membership should be conditioned by a specific regulation or restriction. On the advice of the executive board, the assembly decided to answer both questions in the negative: everyone who was able to reconcile the aim of the NPB to contribute to a free development of religious life with his or her conscience was welcome to join the NPB. Krijthe, however, still felt that he was being treated as a second-class member; he suspected Hugenholtz of silencing him by refusing to publish his articles. At the 1879 general NPB meeting, he therefore brought forward a motion, stating that he was just as much entitled to be an NPB member as anyone else and that no one had the right to question the legitimacy of his membership any longer. On the advice of the executive board, this motion was rejected: general assemblies should not take it upon themselves to pass judgement on Krijthe’s conscience, but neither on the conscience of those who disputed his membership. See: M., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-04 (27 January 1877), 4; F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-05 (3 February 1877), 4; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland’, *Ibid.* 1877-06 (10 February 1877), 2-3; M.A.N. Rovers, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-07 (17 February 1877), 4; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Correspondentie’, *Ibid.* 1877-07 (17 February 1877), 4; ‘Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsch Protestantenvond – Hoofdbestuur’, *Ibid.* 1877-09 (3 March 1877), 2; A.G. van Hamel, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, appendix to *Ibid.* 1877-09 (3 March 1877), 3-4; Een lid van den Prot. Bond, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, appendix to *Ibid.* 1877-09 (3 March 1877), 4; H.C.J. Krijthe, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-11 (17 March 1877), 4; A.D., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-19 (12 May 1877), 4; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-31 (4 August 1877), 3; H.C.J. Krijthe, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Uhlich’s “Godsdienst der rede”’, *Ibid.* 1877-31 (4 August 1877), 3-4; J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-32 (11 August 1877), 3-4; H.C.J. Krijthe, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-32 (11 August 1877), 4; G. van Enst, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-36 (8 September 1877), 4; F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1877-42 (20 October 1877), 3-4; *Verslag NPB 1877*, 18-19; A. Hinlopen, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1878-05 (2 February 1878), 3-4; *Verslag NPB 1879*, 26-28; H.C.J. Krijthe, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Ter verdediging’, *De Hervorming* 1880-10 (6 March 1880), 40. Krijthe continued to be a controversial figure afterwards. He joined the freethinkers’ association *De Dageraad*, stood up for a radical form of socialism, and blamed the modernist movement for being half-hearted and neglecting low-class needs at NPB meetings, causing him to be completely isolated in modernist circles and to earn the nickname “the terror of the Protestant Days” (“...de schrik der Protestantendagen...”). Quoted from: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 34. See also: ‘H.J.C. Krijthe uit Koelvorden’, *Morgenrood* 1894-37 (1894), 292-293; L. Buning, ‘Krijthe, de vertrouwensman van Domela Nieuwenhuis in Drenthe’, *Nieuwe Drentse Volksalmanak* LXXXVI (1968), 28-52, there 37-41; T.E.M. Krijger, ‘Een “klein verhaal” over een “groot Verhaal”. De kwestie-Krijthe in de NPB (1876-1884)’, *Ruimte / Mens & Tijd* 2015-02 (2015), 6-8.

they continued to regard the marvels that Jesus the Nazarene is said to have performed in the New Testament as historical facts. Moreover, although he was not pleased with the presence of modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church and even denied modernists' right to be in it, P. Hofstede de Groot, one of the leading *evangelische* theologians, was against measures to actively expel them.<sup>45</sup> Accordingly, orthodox ministers should temper their hatred of all who disagreed with their dogmatic convictions. Because of their scruples about modernists' 'desecration' of the Gospel and their abhorrence of orthodox 'bibliolatry', *evangelischen* presented themselves as the moderates, refusing to engage in inner-church controversies.<sup>46</sup> Although the founders of the NPB had hoped to make common cause with them in ecclesial matters, as they were just as abhorred by confessionalism as modernists, *evangelischen* therefore kept aloof from the NPB, clinging to their principle of impartiality.<sup>47</sup>

In modernist circles, the *evangelische* demeanour of not taking sides was seen as a sign of weakness.<sup>48</sup> *Evangelischen* were seen as conservatives *par excellence*, thwarting real reforms and basically ignoring the existence of fundamental theological differences within the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>49</sup> It was frequently questioned in *De Hervorming* whether *evangelischen* were as committed to their 'centre position' as they claimed to be. In particular, their insistence not to formalise doctrinal freedom within the Dutch Reformed Church, but to keep this church 'chained up' to an established creed, albeit a confession of faith formulated in such a vaguely way that everyone could interpret it the way he wanted to, was regarded in modernist circles as a submission to orthodoxy.<sup>50</sup> Although *evangelischen* and confessionalists shared a belief in the supernatural character of the Gospel, modernists could not believe how the former could be so blind as to not see that the latter were their biggest nemeses. As soon as confessionalists would have chased modernists out of the Dutch Reformed Church, they would turn to *evangelischen*

<sup>45</sup> P. Hofstede de Groot, *Aan de Nederduitsche Hervormde Gemeente te Groningen. Rekenschap ter zake van de benoeming van het kiescollege* (Groningen 1867), 10; [P. Hofstede de Groot in:] A.F. Mackenstein, 'Kroniek', *De Hervorming* 1874-19 (7 May 1874), 1-2, there 1.

<sup>46</sup> Klooster, *Groninger Godgeleerdheid in Friesland*, 218-220. Yet, Hofstede de Groot denied that the *evangelische* current stood in between the orthodox and the modernist currents; it represented distinct theological views and had a right to exist not merely as a moderate faction in the Dutch Reformed Church. See: P. Hofstede de Groot, *Iets over de Evangelische Alliantie, welke in Augustus en September 1866 te Amsterdam hare zamenkomsten zal houden* (Groningen 1866), 11.

<sup>47</sup> Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederlanden*, 415; [Van den Bergh], *Het werk van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond*, 4; Herderschee, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 296; Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond van 1870 tot 1920*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> E.g.: 'Het "Evangelisch Zondagsblad" en de evangelische partij', *De Hervorming* 1877-04 (27 January 1877), 1-2, there 2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De evangelische partij', *Ibid.* 1877-11 (17 March 1877), 1-2, there 2; 'Buitenland – Quia en quatenus', *Ibid.* 1877-16 (21 April 1877), 3-4; Z., 'Ingezonden stukken – Moet eene kerk eene belijdenis hebben?', *Ibid.* 1877-42 (20 October 1877), 3-4, there 3; Q.N., 'De evangelischen en de tuchtroede', *Ibid.* 1883-02 (13 January 1883), 7; A. Kuenen, 'Buitenland – Engeland', *Ibid.* 1883-30 (28 July 1883), 119.

<sup>49</sup> E.g.: 'Mededeelingen en berichten', *Ibid.* 1874-04 (22 January 1874), 4; R.T.H.P.L.A. van Boneval Faure, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1883-35 (1 September 1883), 140.

<sup>50</sup> E.g.: 'Mededeelingen en berichten – Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1874-21 (21 May 1874), 3; 'Pers-kout', *Ibid.* 1874-38 (17 September 1874), 3; 'Kroniek', *Ibid.* 1876-37 (14 September 1876), 3; [H.C. Lohr], 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1876-39 (28 September 1876), 2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Kerkelijke kwestie – De synodale vergadering van 1879', *Ibid.* 1879-37 (13 September 1879), 147; R.T.H.P.L.A. van Boneval Faure, 'Kerkelijke kwestie – De kerkelijke reglementen en het recht van het geweten', *Ibid.* 1880-05 (31 January 1880), 19-20, there 19; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Het adres der evangelischen aan de synode der N.H. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1883-17 (28 April 1883), 66; C.G. Chavannes, 'De kerkelijke quaestie', *Ibid.* 1884-39 (27 September 1884), 157; [H.U. Meyboom in:] 'De 15<sup>e</sup> algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1885-46 (14 November 1885), 181-182, there 181; A.C.J. van der Kemp, 'Ingezonden stukken – "Bepaald onwaar"', *Ibid.* 1892-23 (4 June 1892), 92.

as their next prey.<sup>51</sup> Instead of recognising this, *evangelischen* naively believed that a free-floating middle-of-the-road policy could ultimately settle inner-church quarrels. When, in the course of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the so-called ‘*ethisch-orthodoxen*’, who accentuated the time-bound character of the biblical texts while acknowledging that these texts referred to a historical reality, began to take over the role of *evangelischen* as the Dutch Reformed ‘centre faction’, modernists accused them of half-heartedness and self-delusion as well.<sup>52</sup>

The images modernists used in the late nineteenth century to characterise themselves were generally self-congratulatory. In their own eyes, modernists were heralds of the coming age, having insights and ideas others lacked and were unwilling to recognise as true. Using ‘light’ as a metaphor to refer to the findings of historical-critical biblical studies and cultural trends, A.F. Mackensteen (1842-1875), for example, gave clear proof of this self-perception in *De Hervorming* in 1874. Depicting the Dutch Reformed Church as a three-storey house, with each floor accommodating a specific group, he wrote that only the floor occupied by modernists was fully illuminated. Orthodox lived in the windowless basement, into which no light was able to penetrate. *Evangelischen* were situated on the ground floor, which gave them the opportunity to allow as much light as possible into their lives. Yet, referring to their reluctance to read the New Testament in a historical-critical way, Mackensteen wrote that the *evangelischen* kept the curtains on the ground floor closed to prevent the light from entering unrestrictedly. Modernists occupied the first floor. The windows on this floor did not have curtains and were always open.<sup>53</sup> Such a self-congratulatory self-image was no exclusive characteristic of modernists; confessionalists and *evangelischen* spoke about themselves in a similar manner. It is, however, important to point it out here, as this self-image came to be severely criticised in modernist circles in the early twentieth century.

### 3. Criticising the Modernist Identity

The dominant modernist self-perception of being the ‘true heirs to the Reformation’, the true champions of the freedom of conscience and the true religious ‘*illuminati*’, gradually lost its appeal to a growing number of liberal Protestants as of the mid-1890s. The speeches given at general NPB assemblies, which serve as annual points of reference to determine the mental constitution of the Dutch modernist movement, particularly demonstrate this. At the 1898 NPB meeting, for instance, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. accused his fellow modernists of being “too weak and too half-hearted” to call themselves true ‘Protestants’.<sup>54</sup> In 1900, L. Knappert, contrasting the then modernist movement with that of ten to thirty years ago, lectured that “we no longer congratulate

<sup>51</sup> E.g.: ‘Buitenland – Hannover’, *Ibid.* 1877-01 (6 January 1877), 3; Van Manen, ‘De synodale besluiten tegen de gewetensvrijheid’, 381; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘De jongste besluiten der Ned. Herv. synode’, *De Hervorming* 1883-37 (15 September 1883), 146-147, there 146.

<sup>52</sup> E.g.: I. Hooykaas, ‘Het plan eener nieuwe vertaling van het Oude Testament’, *Ibid.* 1884-44 (1 November 1884), 175-176, there 176; H. Oort, ‘De O. T<sup>sche</sup> kritiek en de orthodoxie’, *Ibid.* 1892-19 (7 May 1892), 73-74. In 1891, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. wrote to believe that the moderately orthodox Protestants of today would be the modernists of tomorrow: modern theological views, he perceived, were increasingly adopted in moderately orthodox circles. See: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1891-14 (4 April 1891), 56. On the *ethischen*, see: P.W.J.L. Gerretsen, *Vrijzinnig noch rechtzinnig. Daniël Chantepie de la Saussaye (1818-1874) en Jan Hendrik Gerretsen (1867-1923) in de ban van het ethische beginsel* (Gorinchem 2014).

<sup>53</sup> A.F. Mackensteen, ‘Kroniek’, *De Hervorming* 1874-19 (7 May 1874), 1-2, there 1.

<sup>54</sup> “...te zwakke, te flauwe...” Quoted from: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Ons Allerheiligen’, *Ibid.* 1898-45 (5 November 1898), 179-180, there 179.

ourselves as ‘the truest descendants of the Reformation’. We no longer put ourselves, liberal Protestants of the nineteenth century, on a par with Isaiah, Jesus, Paul, Luther and Lessing.”<sup>55</sup> Parroting Hugenholtz and Knappert, J. van Loenen Martinet disappointedly noticed in 1904 that the early twentieth-century modernist movement was not bubbling over with ardour and enthusiasm.<sup>56</sup> Occasionally, echoes of the nineteenth century could still be heard in modernist circles. C.J. Niemeijer (1864-1932), to name one prominent example, still jubilantly characterised modernists as the ‘true heirs to the Reformation’ at the NPB assembly of 1913.<sup>57</sup> However, as these cases indicate, a different, more modest and less exultant tune came to be sung in the late 1890s and 1900s. This trend even intensified in subsequent decades. In the twentieth century, the self-image modernists had adopted in the previous century was subjected to severe criticism. In consequence, the dichotomy between modernism and orthodoxy, upon which this self-image had been built, came no longer to be seen as self-evident.

The modernist self-image of heralding a second Reformation and finishing the work started by the sixteenth-century Reformers stemmed from the ideal of bridging the gap between Christianity and modern culture. Initially, there was no doubt that the modernist movement would indeed succeed in this; “it might take ages,” H.Ph. de Kanter cheered in *De Hervorming* in 1874, “but we shall shout victory. [...] The future is ours!”<sup>58</sup> However, when these hopes and expectations had still not come true after several decades, the self-image inherently connected to these expectations became problematic. As early as the mid-1880s, some modernists thought that the optimism and self-assurance that had accompanied the modernist movement from its earliest phase onwards were unwarranted and naïve.<sup>59</sup> Afterwards, such feelings increased.<sup>60</sup> Instead of crumbling away, orthodoxy became numerically stronger and more powerful every year, culminating in the appointment of A. Kuyper as Dutch prime minister in 1901. In terms of numerical strength and social visibility, the modernist movement lost out to orthodoxy.

<sup>55</sup> “*Want het is niet meer zóo met ons, dat wij ons, al te boud, der Hervorming beste zonen roemen.*” Quoted from: L. Knappert, ‘Toespraak, gehouden in de feestelijke godsdienstoefening bij gelegenheid der alg. verg. van den N.P.B. op 31 Oct. 1900’, *Ibid.* 1900-44 (1900-44), 337-339, there 337. Knappert re-uttered the exact same comment at the meeting of 1917. See: [L. Knappert], ‘Openingswoord’, *Ibid.* 1917-49 (8 December 1917), 406-407, there 406.

<sup>56</sup> J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Toespraak, gehouden in de godsdienstoefening bij gelegenheid der algemeene vergadering van den Ned. Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1904-44 (29 October 1904), 345-347, there 346. Van Loenen Martinet’s lecture was published as a separate brochure, tellingly titled “*Richt op de slappe knieën...!*” *Toespraak, gehouden in de vergadering van de Ned. Protestantenvond*, published in Assen in 1905. This title was a reference to Hebr. 12:12.

<sup>57</sup> C.J. Niemeijer, ‘Verblijdt u! Toespraak van dr. C.J. Niemeijer in de openbare godsdienstoefening te Alkmaar 28 October 1913’, *De Hervorming* 1913-44 (1 November 1913), 345-347, there 346. Three years before, Niemeijer had already implied the same, by putting forward the old modernist accusation that orthodox Protestantism was no *true* Protestantism and shared its dogmatism and intolerance with Roman Catholicism. See: C.J. Niemeijer, *Rome en het Protestantisme. Toespraak, gehouden naar aanleiding van de Borromaeus-encycliek* (Bolsward 1910), 15.

<sup>58</sup> “...toekomst, want die is, misschien eerst over eeuwen, maar toch onherroepelijk, ons.” Quoted from: H.Ph. de Kanter, “Het kerkelijk vraagstuk”, *De Hervorming* 1874-17 (23 April 1874), 3-4, there 4. See also: A. Admiraal, ‘O, gij kleingeloovigen!’, *Ibid.* 1874-08 (19 February 1874), 1.

<sup>59</sup> E.g.: V.H., ‘Ik ga visschen’, *Ibid.* 1883-32 (11 August 1883), 125; [M.J. Mees in:] ‘Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1884-46 (15 November 1884), 183-185, there 185; [C.P. Tiele in:] ‘Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne theologen’, *Ibid.* 1886-19 (8 May 1886), 74-75, there 75; J.A. Böhringer, ‘Toespraak in de godsdienstoefening t.g.v. den Protestantendag te Deventer’, *Ibid.* 1889-43 (26 October 1889), 169-170, there 169; [A. Bruining in:] ‘Binnenland – De vergadering der moderne theologen’, *Ibid.* 1890-16 (19 April 1890), 63.

<sup>60</sup> E.g.: W. Zaalberg, ‘Herinneringen en wenschen’, *Ibid.* 1895-45 (9 November 1895), 177-178, there 177; [A. Bruining in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Afd. Schiedam’, *Ibid.* 1897-08 (20 February 1897), 30; B.C.J. Mosselmans, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Waarom?’, *Ibid.* 1901-43 (26 October 1901), 342; ‘De lendenen omgord!’, *Ibid.* 1902-01 (4 January 1902), 1-2, there 2.



The modernist movement was subjected to criticism from within, not only because it had not come up to initial expectations, but also because it had still not been able to make clear what exactly it stood for. In 1895, for example, Dutch Reformed minister A. van der Heide (1872-1953) lamented that modernism was still merely a denial of orthodoxy. It had not been able to become anything else.<sup>61</sup> Such complaints intensified due to the emergence of the so-called ‘movement of youngsters’ around 1895, ‘malcontents’ in the early 1900s, and ‘right-wing modernists’ in the 1910s. Although, regarding theoretical foundations and composition, not completely similar, mystical youngsters, malcontents and right-wing modernists had the same theological orientation and put forward the same grievances against the then modernist mainstream.<sup>62</sup> There is much more to say about each of these three groups, but here, it is sufficient to analyse the implications that their shared criticism had for the identity of the modernist movement as a whole.<sup>63</sup>

In the eyes of mystical youngsters, malcontents and right-wing modernists, the modernist movement had been preoccupied with the popularisation of anti-orthodox theological views and an anti-confessionalist view on the church. It had been too intellectualistic, focusing on the rational justification of belief in God and hence neglecting the deepest needs of the human soul. Moreover, its optimistic faith in its own invincibility and in the innate goodness of mankind had led to blind triumphalism and had narrowed the Christian religion down to a moral code. In modernism, the line between what is human and what is divine had been blurred too much, due to most modern theologians’ monistic outlook on life. Contrasting themselves with first-generation modernists and their present-day disciples, to whom they referred as ‘old-school modernists’ and who later came to be called ‘left-wing modernists’, malcontents believed that there is a distance between God and man that can only be bridged through ‘Christ’, the unseen force of salvation expressed in the image of Jesus the Nazarene.<sup>64</sup> On the whole, malcontents felt that the modernist movement was still only striking at the foundations of church life and the Christian faith without unleashing a religious revival.<sup>65</sup> The way old-school modernists responded to malcontents made the latter feel misunderstood or even silenced.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> A. van der Heide, ‘Aesthetisch waardeeren’, *Ibid.* 1895-06 (9 February 1895), 22.

<sup>62</sup> Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 215-216.

<sup>63</sup> An account of the theological nuances within and between the groups of ‘malcontents’ and ‘right-wing modernists’, as well as of the reactions their emergence evoked among other modernists, is given in: Van Driel, *Scheren in de schemering*, 130-270.

<sup>64</sup> Although old-school modernism and left-wing modernism were not entirely identical: the left-wing modernists of the 1920s and 1930s lacked the optimistic belief in progress and human perfectibility that had characterised the old-school modernists in the 1900s and 1910s. See: *Ibid.*, 186, note 58. An overview of the theological differences between left-wing and right-wing modernism, as they existed in the late 1930s, is given in: H. Faber, *Rechts en links in het vrijzinnig Christendom* (Amsterdam 1937).

<sup>65</sup> E.g.: J.J. Bleeker, ‘Hét Evangelie’, *De Hervorming* 1904-32 (6 August 1904), 230-231; V.d.B., ‘Leestafel – “Theologisch Tijdschrift”’, *Ibid.* 1909-11 (13 March 1909), 85-86, there 86; D.A. Vorster, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1909-16 (17 April 1909), 126; P.H. Veen, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1909-30 (24 July 1909), 237; G.J. Heering, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1910-46 (12 November 1910), 366; G.J. Heering, ‘Zonde en schuld’, *Ibid.* 1913-07 (15 February 1913), 50-51; [A.S. Carpentier Altling in:] ‘Redactioneel – De moderne vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1915-17 (24 April 1915), 142-149, there 143; G.J. Heering, ‘Hoofdartikelen – “Een van de oude garde”’, *Ibid.* 1915-49 (4 December 1915), 442-443; H.A. van Bakel, ‘Bondsleven – Vervolgbundel’, *Ibid.* 1920-38 (25 September 1920), 150-151; Heering, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd’, 77-88.

<sup>66</sup> G.J. Heering, “‘De Hervorming’ hervormd”, *De Hervorming* 1914-06 (7 February 1914), 45-47, there 46-47; [G.J. Heering in:] ‘Redactioneel – Nieuwe koers?’, *Ibid.* 1914-09 (28 February 1914), 72. See also: Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 49-51.

These modernists who denounced the modernist mainstream for what they perceived to be its theologically intellectualistic, optimistic and monistic character perfectly knew that their criticism might be seen as a ‘return’ to orthodoxy, at least as far as their thoughts on sin, grace and the personal experience of ‘Christ’ were concerned. However, to their own way of thinking, their criticism was rather the expression of a ‘rediscovery’ or ‘resurgence’ of an anti-intellectualistic, anti-monistic undercurrent in modernist theology that had most pronouncedly, albeit briefly, manifested itself as ‘ethical modernism’ in the 1870s.<sup>67</sup> As analysed in chapter 2, ethical modernists had challenged the blend of Scholten’s rationalism – the idea that logic leads to the acknowledgement of God’s existence – and Opzoomer’s empiricism – the idea that God’s existence is confirmed through experience –, which had come to dominate modern theology, by embroidering upon Mennonite theologian S. Hoekstra’s argument that the human need for deliverance from personal imperfection makes people believe in God. Ethical modernists had therefore concerned themselves more with the praxis of faith, evolving around the notion of morality, than with theoretical reflections upon faith itself.<sup>68</sup> However, one of them, I.J. le Cosquino de Bussy (1846-1920), had started in the 1880s to focus on notions in Hoekstra’s theology that ethical modernism, and modernism in general, had rather neglected: notions such as ‘sin’ and ‘mercy’.<sup>69</sup> Looking back upon the development of modern theology in 1889, De Bussy had noticed with regret that ‘sin’ had come to stand in for every immoral act or poorly developed moral sense, and ‘mercy’ for the feeling one gets after showing remorse for committing such an immoral act. According to De Bussy, however, ‘sin’ and ‘mercy’ encroach much deeper upon human existence. People, he believed, are sinful, because they are not, as modernists commonly preached, inclined to do what is ‘good’ by nature. ‘Sin’ was not just an ethical imperfection; it referred to every human’s inclination to shrink back from self-abnegation – meaning that people only want to do good things because and insofar as it pleases themselves. Doing good things solely because they are good is the highest state of being. That, De Bussy argued, is only possible if people are truly one with God. The awareness of this unity with God is ‘mercy’.<sup>70</sup>

De Bussy’s argument sharply contrasted with the anthropocentric, optimistic sermons that his modernist colleagues delivered. For that reason, Dutch Reformed minister J.J. Bleeker (1869-1946), a malcontent hardliner, depicted him as the ‘father’ of malcontentism.<sup>71</sup> Mennonite minister H. Britzel (1886-1944), another malcontent, similarly regarded him as an early right-wing modernist – together with S. Cramer, who had shown a belief in a dualistic relationship between man and God already in 1882, and Hoekstra.<sup>72</sup> By so doing, Bleeker and Britzel claimed

<sup>67</sup> Faber, *Rechts en links in het vrijzinnig Christendom*, 7.

<sup>68</sup> Van Diggelen, ‘Albertus Bruining’, 35.

<sup>69</sup> The following sources include De Bussy among the ethical modernists: ‘In memoriam. Prof. I.J. de Bussy †’, *De Hervorming* 1920-42 (23 October 1920), 167; H.A. van Bakel, ‘De godgeleerdheid’, in: H. Brugmans et al. (eds.), *Gedenkboek van het Athenaeum en de Universiteit van Amsterdam, 1632-1932* (Amsterdam 1932), 109-125, there 117; Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 48.

<sup>70</sup> I.J. de Bussy, ‘De ontwikkelingsgang van de moderne richting’, *De Gids* LIII (1889), 91-135, there 130-134. Although its title referred to the modernist movement, this article was in fact about modern theology. Cf.: Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 3, note 1. De Bussy had already criticised modernists’ optimistic outlook on life in: I.J. de Bussy, ‘De moderne godsdienstprediking’, *Bijblad van De Hervorming* 1887-05 (13 July 1887), 65-80.

<sup>71</sup> J.J. Bleeker, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1905-15 (15 April 1905), 116; J.J. Bleeker, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Van onze moderne vaders’, *Ibid.* 1917-26 (30 June 1917), 210.

<sup>72</sup> In: S. Cramer, *Konservatief modernisme, godgeleerdheid en volksleven* (Leiden 1882); H. Britzel, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Professor Hoekstra onder de oud-modernen!’, *De Hervorming* 1911-23 (10 June 1911), 183.

that malcontentism was no new phenomenon, but as old as the modernist movement itself.<sup>73</sup> Malcontents' self-image as being disciples of older modernist dissidents was, with regard to Hoekstra, nonetheless problematic. As said, Hoekstra had inspired the emergence of 'ethical modernism', which was anti-intellectualistic, but also very moralistic.<sup>74</sup> Moralism was exactly one of the things malcontents disliked in modernism. Only one of Hoekstra's pupils, De Bussy, had come to highlight the experience of sin and mercy as the central elements of faith. Others who had been ethical modernists in the 1870s, such as H. Oort and A. Bruining (1846-1919), however, had developed in an opposite direction and were among malcontents' fiercest opponents.<sup>75</sup> There was thus no straight line running from Hoekstra to malcontentism.<sup>76</sup>

Old-school modernists thought malcontents' criticism was unfair. In their view, theologically dissatisfied modernists failed to recognise the apologetic motives behind the emergence of modern theology and the modernist movement in the mid-nineteenth century. Saying that the first generation of modernists had merely been iconoclasts was unjust. Modern theology and the modernist movement, old-school modernists contended, had emerged out of a feeling that existing hermeneutics, dogmatics and ecclesial practices more and more conflicted with what was going on outside theological faculties and church life. In order to bridge this growing gap between Christian religiosity and the modern era, a new approach to the Bible and a differently-shaped faith community were needed. It was simply impossible to aspire after these without intellectualising why certain conceptions of God, interpretations of Scripture and church regulations were untenable in the first place. What might seem to be a solely intellectualist endeavour, turning reason into the only criterion to decide which beliefs, rituals and values deserved to be cherished, was thus profoundly motivated by a *cri de cœur* from people who could no longer satisfy themselves with what conventional theology and church life had to offer them.<sup>77</sup>

Blaming the earliest modernists, and those who theologically and ecclesiologically still followed in their wake, for ignoring the reality of sin was equally unjust. The central notion in old-school modernist theology was that of the Kingdom of God. As A. Bruining admitted in 1913, the optimistic expectation that individual will power could indeed bring the completion of this Kingdom of God nearer was stronger developed in old-school modernism than the sense of sin. But was this a lack, something to lament about? Bruining and others did not think so. In old-school modernism, it was not ignored that Christianity intrinsically is a religion of salvation, but 'sin' was not seen as an obstacle to spiritual development, from which individuals needed to be delivered to be able to near God: instead, old-school modernists took the sinful, imperfect

<sup>73</sup> See also: G.J. Heering, 'Zonde en schuld', *Ibid.* 1913-05 (1 February 1913), 34-35.

<sup>74</sup> Verberne, *Geschiedenis van Nederland* VIII, 63.

<sup>75</sup> Van Diggelen, 'Albertus Bruining', 50; R. Kuipers, 'Wetenschap – In memoriam prof.dr. A. Bruining', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCII.29704 (25 November 1919), evening paper, 9-10, there 10.

<sup>76</sup> Contrary to what K. Vos suggested in a newspaper article commemorating the hundred-year existence of the General Mennonite Society. Vos called De Bussy "a worthy pupil of and successor to Hoekstra" ("...een waardig leerling en opvolger van Hoekstra..."). Quoted from: K. Vos, 'De Algemeene Doopsgezinde Sociëteit te Amsterdam, 1811-21 augustus 1911', *Ibid.* LXXXIV.26707 (21 August 1911), evening paper, 9.

<sup>77</sup> E.g.: C.G. Chavannes, 'Mijmeringen V. Intellectualisme', *Teekenen des Tijds* V (1903), 284-303; C.G. Chavannes, 'Óf – óf', *De Hervorming* 1909-01 (2 January 1909), 3-4; W.F. Loman, 'Over intellectualisme', *Ibid.* 1909-20 (15 May 1909), 153-154; H. Oort, 'De beteekenis der moderne theologie', *Ibid.* 1914-17 (25 April 1914), 141-143; J. Herderscheê, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Modern en religieus', *Ibid.* 1919-26 (28 June 1919), 111.

state of the individual to be the *starting point* of spiritual development.<sup>78</sup> Right-wing modernists therefore chided old-school modernists for preaching an ethics of virtue, while neglecting the personal experience of the divine reality that transcends the human mind.

Attempting to show that old-school modernism did not disregard emotional life, Van Loenen Martinet, an outspoken old-school modernist himself, introduced a new feature in *De Hervorming* in 1911, in which early modernists' utterances about their innermost religious feelings were published.<sup>79</sup> Architect Pl. van den Berg (1863-1944), who did not want to take sides in the theological controversy raging in the modernist movement, did not challenge the qualification of old-school modernist sermons as exclusively 'moralistic', but rather argued that such sermons were needed to breed indignation over everything that was wrong in society.<sup>80</sup> Others characterised the strong emphasis on sin as a return to the theological position out of which early modernists had struggled with much difficulty. Responding to G.J. Heering, who had stated in a rather orthodox-sounding lecture that the acknowledgment of one's 'depravity' is a precondition to near God, in 1912, Sunday school teacher G.A. Hoevers (1869-1941) sighed: "there we are again in the pew of sinners. We need to look at ourselves as deeply wicked creatures again to be able to experience the Gospel. And I thought that we were delivered from that nightmare! [I thought] that the Gospel is the glad news and the gratifying tiding of God's eternal love and well-being [...] for all humans in all circumstances of life."<sup>81</sup> Eight years later, A.H. van der Hoeve also stated to be highly critical of turning sin into the central notion of faith. Those who proclaimed that a stronger sense of sin was the ultimate remedy to rally religious life, he feared, might easily look down upon others who disagreed.<sup>82</sup>

Nonetheless, old-school modernists were fighting a rearguard action. This is not to say that all modernists came to embrace a more dualistic view on the relationship between God and man, and came to more closely identify the biblical image of Jesus the Nazarene with the eternal force of salvation called 'Christ', but rather that right-wing modernism would set the tone among them in the 1920s and 1930s. The atrocities of the First World War dealt a severe blow to the ethical and cultural optimism that was so characteristic of old-school modernism. The sight of the modernist movement consequently changed: theologically speaking, it gave the impression of positioning itself more closely to historical Christianity than beforehand.<sup>83</sup>

<sup>78</sup> E.g.: C.G. Chavannes, 'Schuld – zonde – straf', *Teekenen des Tijds* VII (1905), 1-27; D.V., 'Van een oud-moderne', *De Hervorming* 1909-29 (17 July 1909), 227; N.J. Telders, 'Ouden en jongen', *Ibid.* 1909-30 (24 July 1909), 234-235; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Oorzaken van het weinige succes der moderne geloofsprediking', *Ibid.* 1909-41 (9 October 1909), 322-323; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Zondebewustzijn', *Ibid.* 1910-24 (11 June 1910), 185-186; A. Bruining, 'Oud-modernen en malcontenten', *Ibid.* 1913-01 (4 January 1913), 2-3; M.C. van Wijhe, 'Malcontentisme', *Ibid.* 1913-36 (6 September 1913), 283-284.

<sup>79</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Voor hart en leven – Oud-modernen aan het woord', *Ibid.* 1911-16 (22 April 1911), 126.

<sup>80</sup> Pl. van den Berg, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1909-34 (21 August 1909), 269.

<sup>81</sup> "...daar zitten we weer midden in 't arme zondaarsbankje en moeten ons bovenal weer diep verworven schepsels vinden, om het Evangelie te kunnen ervaren. En ik dacht dat we van die nachtmerrie verlost waren en dat het Evangelie is de Blijde Boodschap en blijd-makende tijding van Gods eeuwige liefde en welbehagen voor zijne [...] menschenkinderen in alle omstandigheden des levens." Quoted from: Gerarda [G.A. Hoevers], 'Over vakantie en zonde', *Ibid.* 1912-37 (14 September 1912), 291. See also: A.C. van Daalen, 'Ingezonden stukken – De bondsbeginselen in de knel', *Ibid.* 1908-26 (27 June 1908), 206-207; K., 'Berichten, enz. – De "malcontenten"', *Ibid.* 1909-52 (25 December 1909), 413.

<sup>82</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Ziele-cultus', *Ibid.* 1920-25 (26 June 1920), 97-98.

<sup>83</sup> Heering, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd', 77-88. In 1917, a certain 'G.H.' even wrote that the modernist movement only had a future if it would cling to the Christian tradition more pronouncedly. See: G.H., 'Heeft de vrijzinnig-godsdienstige richting nog altijd toekomst?', *Teekenen des Tijds* XIX (2017), 409-429, there 427.

Criticism also came to be passed on nineteenth-century modernists' interpretation of the 'freedom of conscience' upon which they had built their self-image. During the 1903 NPB assembly, Dutch Reformed minister I. van den Bergh (1846-1911) lectured that in modernist circles, 'freedom of conscience' had come to stand for 'neutrality', a tolerant attitude even to those who were condescending about others. In practice, this tolerance often served as a façade behind which modernists could hide doubts about their own identity. Moreover, modernists generally confused respect for opinions other than their own with appreciation or even approval. Instead, they should straightforwardly express that confessionalist intolerance was not something worthy of being tolerated, and should try to eradicate it with more vigour than they had done so far.<sup>84</sup> The 'neutral' or 'tolerant' *laissez-faire* mentality in which an application of the principle of the freedom of conscience resulted, Van den Bergh continued, had nourished the thought that religion should be kept out of political life.<sup>85</sup> Fearing that an all-too-close entanglement of modernist religiosity and politics would lead to a modernist counterpart of Kuyperianism, the grand majority of liberal Protestants supported liberal politics. However, political liberalism, as others than Van den Bergh stressed, used the term 'neutrality' to mask a lack of interest in ecclesial and religious matters.<sup>86</sup> The principle of the liberty of conscience as belonging to the core identity of modernists was not questioned as such, but the 'neutral' stance to which it had led did receive an increasing amount of criticism in the first decades of the twentieth century.

In addition, the identity of the NPB came to be criticised as well. Furthering 'the free development of religious life within and outside the ecclesial domain' might be a formulation with which all modernists could agree, but it lacked clarity, occasionally leading to controversies. Ultimately, it also lacked the appeal necessary to attract new members. In 1907, even then NPB chairman B.D. Eerdman had to admit that it was "not easy to convince people to join an organisation with a goal that many regard as too unclear and not substantial enough."<sup>87</sup> Explaining what the NPB stood for was already difficult in itself, but making concrete how its goal should be realised was even harder. Whenever some NPB members made a proposal for collective action, dissension and even a potential disintegration of the NPB came to the surface. The association as a whole did not have a clear profile, besides being the central point of assembly of modernists in the Netherlands. This was no real threat to the viability of the NPB, as long as modernists were indeed willing to grant the NPB a central position within their movement. However, as chapter 4 explains, the willingness to do so diminished in the twentieth century.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> A. Bruining made a similar remark during the 1904 NPB assembly. Responding to A.W. van Wijk's lecture on liberal Protestantism and tolerance, he argued that intolerant orthodox Protestants should be combatted from their own point of view, meaning that modernists should be just as intolerant towards orthodox as orthodox were towards them. See: [A. Bruining in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De Dordtsche samenkomsten', *De Hervorming* 1904-46 (12 November 1904), 363-365, there 365.

<sup>85</sup> I. van den Bergh, 'Wat ons te doen staat', *Ibid.* 1903-44 (31 October 1903), 316-317.

<sup>86</sup> Chapter 9 deals with this matter more extensively.

<sup>87</sup> "...niet gemakkelijk leden te winnen voor een doel, dat voor velen bovendien nog wat zwevend en te weinig reëel schijnt." Quoted from: [B.D. Eerdman in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering', *De Hervorming* 1907-43 (26 October 1907), 340-342, there 340.

<sup>88</sup> Still in 1954, Boerlage stated that it was not easy to describe the meaning and the aims of the NPB. In religious life, it had "a position that is not immediately clear to everyone," not even to its executive board, committees and branch management ("neemt de Bond een plaats in, die niet dadelijk voor iedereen duidelijk is"). Quoted from: Boerlage, *De Nederlandse Protestantse Bond*, 1.

The depiction of modernism as everything that orthodoxy was not, not only became problematic in the early twentieth century due to the emergence of malcontentism, but also because it came to be recognised in modernist circles that present-day orthodoxy did not simply stick to age-old doctrines, and that it was even indebted to modern theology. B.D. Eerdmans, Dutch Reformed minister C. Hille Ris Lambers (1865-1958) and Mennonite ministers C.B. Hylkema (1870-1948) and A. Binnerts (1865-1932) substantiated this in studies and lectures on neo-Calvinism. Although Hylkema, contrary to Eerdmans, admitted that Calvin's theology and neo-Calvinism were both based on the idea of man's insignificance as opposed to God's omnipotence and thus had a shared fundamental principle,<sup>89</sup> both Hylkema and Eerdmans felt that particularly the neo-Calvinist vision on the authority of Scripture, and on the relationship between God and man, was completely out of step with the supernatural character of Calvin's theology.<sup>90</sup> While clothing their ideas in orthodox Reformed phraseology, neo-Calvinists in fact rejected Calvin's 'mechanical' view of the biblical authors as dehumanised 'typewriters'<sup>91</sup> and modified or at least tempered Calvin's 'rigid' doctrine of predestination.<sup>92</sup> Modern theologians should be credited with this, as they were the first, to quote Eerdmans, "to have brought the world view of the modern age into the sphere of theological thinking."<sup>93</sup> Theologians as Eerdmans and Hylkema therefore felt that the theology of Kuyper, H. Bavinck (1854-1921) and their disciples had rightly come to be known as 'neo-Calvinism', not because, as neo-Calvinists claimed themselves, this theology was a rediscovery and revitalisation of pure Calvinist theology, but rather because it borrowed terms from the Calvinist tradition, while giving these a completely new meaning.<sup>94</sup> It can be

<sup>89</sup> C.B. Hylkema, *Oud- en nieuw-calvinisme. Een vergelijkende geschiedkundige studie* (Haarlem 1911), 284-327.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 35, 46-53; B.D. Eerdmans, "Moderne" orthodoxie of "orthodox" modernisme (Baarn 1911), 7, 15-27. See also: A. Binnerts Sz., *Nieuw-gereformeerde en moderne theologie. Beschouwingen naar aanleiding van de rectorale oratie van prof. Bavinck, ter moderne theologenvergadering voorgedragen en aangevuld met een naschrift* (Baarn 1912), 8; F. Dijkema, 'De volkstelling', *De Hervorming* 1911-51 (23 December 1911), 405-406, there 405. Hille Ris Lambers felt that both Eerdmans and Hylkema failed to grasp the essence of neo-Calvinism. Compared to Calvinism proper, neo-Calvinism put a stronger emphasis on predestination, due to which members of the Reformed Churches felt to be a group of elect. Consequently, it was far more dangerous than Calvinism proper: neo-Calvinists would not rest until they had brought the non-elect, that is, everyone else, under their yoke. See: C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Is het Nieuw Calvinisme reactie of vooruitgang?', *Teekenen des Tijds* XIV (1912), 327-352, there 349-350.

<sup>91</sup> Hylkema, *Oud- en nieuw-calvinisme*, 142-144; Eerdmans, "Moderne" orthodoxie, 32-34.

<sup>92</sup> The doctrine of 'common grace' learned that mankind in its entirety shares in God's benevolence, distinguishing it from 'particular grace' or salvation, which God bestows only upon the elect. The idea of 'presumptive regeneration' more or less took the edge of the doctrine of predestination, as it learned that everyone born out of Reformed parents should be considered to be regenerated unless his or her conduct in life would prove the opposite. See: Hylkema, *Oud- en nieuw-calvinisme*, 22, 207, 235, 264-273; Eerdmans, "Moderne" orthodoxie, 38-42.

<sup>93</sup> "Het is de zoogenaamde moderne theologie geweest, die de wereldbeschouwing van den hedendaagschen tijd, de natuurlijke wereldbeschouwing, heeft getrokken binnen den kring van het godgeleerd denken." Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>94</sup> H. Bavinck, together with Kuyper the spiritual father of neo-Calvinism, accepted an invitation to give a lecture at the 1911 meeting of modern theologians. Dealing with modernist criticism of neo-Calvinism, he argued that every religion was essentially supernaturalist and noticed that this came to be recognised in modernist circles as well – thereby referring to the emergence of malcontentism. He defended the concept of common grace as a solution to the problem that science preaches a God who is far away, while religious experience evinces a God who is near. Bavinck distinguished between a modern world view and a modern philosophy of life: he accepted the former, being the outcomes of science, and rejected the latter, being the naturalist interpretation given to those outcomes. See: C. Augustijn, 'Bavinck ter vergadering van moderne theologen 1912', in: C. Augustijn et al., *In rapport met de tijd. 100 jaar theologie aan de Vrije Universiteit* (Kampen 1980), 88-110. See also: H. Bavinck, *Modernisme en orthodoxie* (Kampen [1911]).

The term 'neo-Calvinism' was probably coined by Kuyperian jurist and politician A. Anema (1872-1966), who identified as a 'neo-Calvinist' himself. See: J. Vree, 'Hoe de citadel ontstond. De consolidatie der Vereniging 1892-

questioned whether Eerdmans, Hylkema, Hille Ris Lambers and Binnerts did full justice to both Calvin and neo-Calvinists, but that is not the issue at stake.<sup>95</sup> What is important to note here is that they carried the differences between sixteenth-century Calvinism and neo-Calvinism to an extreme in an attempt to show that modernists' influence on orthodoxy was much larger than their numerical strength might suggest. They thereby challenged the idea, persistent in modernist and neo-Calvinist circles, that orthodoxy and modernism were exact opposites.

One clear demonstration of the blurring dichotomy between modernism and orthodoxy was that mystical youngsters, malcontents and right-wing modernists used 'orthodox' terms, such as 'grace', 'sin' and 'regeneration', without reluctance, and identified Jesus the Nazarene more closely with the eternal, ideal 'Christ' than was customary in liberal Protestantism.<sup>96</sup> Old-school modernists blamed them for this. As early as 1895, when the 'movement of youngsters' was just beginning to germinate, Remonstrant minister J.A. Beijerman (1849-1932) urged his colleagues at the annual meeting of modernist ministers in the northern provinces not to use orthodox terms. A modernist preacher who turned a deaf ear to his plea, Beijerman warned, would either be mistaken for an orthodox one, or not be understood by his modernist audience, which had left behind the supernaturalist realm of thought to which dogmatic terminology referred.<sup>97</sup> Others repeated this plea and put forward additional reasons why the use of orthodox-sounding vocabulary was problematic, such as a certain 'C.P.' in *De Hervorming* in 1902. Although not rejecting old-fashioned terms outright, this article writer cautioned modernist ministers who interspersed their sermons with those terms for exposing themselves to three severe risks. First, such preachers might cause confusion, for it was hard to separate a term such as 'sin' from the meaning orthodoxy

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1905', in: C. Augustijn and J. Vree, *Abraham Kuyper: vast en veranderlijk. De ontwikkeling van zijn denken* (Zoetermeer 1998), 200-242, there 217.

<sup>95</sup> A detailed overview of the controversy between neo-Calvinists and Eerdmans is given in: Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 268-365.

<sup>96</sup> Van Driel, *Schermen in de schemering*, 143-149. On 'mystical' tendencies in the modernist movement, see, e.g.: C.J. Niemeijer, 'Onthouding', *De Hervorming* 1895-20 (18 May 1895), 78; J. de Goederen Wz., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1895-21 (25 May 1895), 84; 'Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne predikanten uit de noordelijke provinciën', *Ibid.* 1895-28 (13 July 1895), 110-111, there 111; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Ernst', *Ibid.* 1897-38 (18 September 1897), 150; [A. Bruining in:] 'Van godsdienstige voorstellingen', *Ibid.* 1910-07 (12 February 1910), 49; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Dr. Van Senden's brochure', *Ibid.* 1912-30 (27 July 1912), 235; 'Berichten, enz. – Jezus Christus te Barchem', *Ibid.* 1912-38 (21 September 1912), 300; N.P. van Regteren Altena, 'Dr. G.J. Heering en de dogmatiek', *Ibid.* 1913-18 (3 May 1913), 139-140; C.E. Hooykaas, 'De godsdienstige beteekenis onzer zomercursussen', *Ibid.* 1913-37 (13 September 1913), 289-290, there 290; J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Modern-godsdienstig en vrijzinnig-christelijk', *Ibid.* 1915-42 (16 October 1915), 369-370, there 370; I.M.J. Hoog, 'In en om de Hervormde Kerk – Ds. H. Bakker tegen evenredige vertegenwoordiging en *modus vivendi*', *Ibid.* 1916-39 (23 September 1916), 331-332, there 332; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Karakter en betekenis der Woodbrookebeweging', *Ibid.* 1918-42 (19 October 1918), 165-166, there 166; W.G. Reddingius, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Mystiek en wereldbeschouwing', *Ibid.* 1924-05 (2 February 1924), 34-35, there 34. See also: Hoenderdaal, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen', 175-176. More interest in mysticism, as a reaction to the perceived intellectualist character of old-school modernism, incited G.H. van Senden to establish the *Vereeniging tot weder-uitgave van mystieke geschriften uit vroegere eeuwen* (Association for the Reissuing of Mystical Texts from Bygone Centuries). He probably did so in 1908, as his association reissued its first mystical text that year. In total, it reissued eight texts, the last of which in 1912, written by, among others, Martin Luther; Gregorio López (±1542-1596), a Spanish hermit who migrated to Mexico; Peter of Alcántara (1499-1562), a Spanish Franciscan friar; and George Fox (1624-1691), the founding father of the Quakers. See: J. van den Bergh van Eysinga-Elias, 'De religie en het ondenkbare', *Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte* II (1908), 447-465, there 459. See also: G.H. van Senden, *De beteekenis der mystieken voor onzen tijd* (Utrecht 1907). This publication was a lecture that Van Senden held during the first (and only?) meeting of the aforementioned association.

<sup>97</sup> [J.A. Beijerman in:] 'Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne predikanten uit de noordelijke provinciën', *De Hervorming* 1895-29 (20 July 1895), 115.

attached to it. Second, traditional terminology might cause annoyance, as it could remind people of the stuffy orthodox atmosphere that had spiritually suffocated them for so long. Third, a preacher who used orthodox terms might become tied up in his own words, failing to give vent to his inner life in such a way that he edified his audience.<sup>98</sup> Remonstrant minister A.H. Haentjens (1876-1968) experienced that these risks were indeed real in 1905. Because Haentjens did not hesitate to make extensive use of orthodox terminology in his sermons, the church council of his congregation in Haarlem began to suspect that he no longer adhered to a modernist interpretation of faith. Haentjens was forced to resign, but the majority of Haarlem Remonstrants called him back to the pulpit.<sup>99</sup> He did not belong to the inner circle of malcontents,<sup>100</sup> but his reinstallation proved that the susceptibility to the use of orthodox terminology, coming particularly to the fore in malcontentism, was increasing in modernist circles. Moreover, the turmoil the whole affair caused in the modernist movement laid bare a growing sense of estrangement between critics and defenders of old-school modernism.<sup>101</sup> Voicing the latter's opinion, Van Loenen Martinet commented upon Haentjens' reinstallation by seeing it as the manifestation of "a current in our ecclesial religious life, due to which, according to many, truth and clarity are severely imperilled."<sup>102</sup> It was perfectly clear that he drew a bead on 'malcontentism', without mentioning the word.

Van Loenen Martinet's accusation that the use of orthodox terms lacked clarity was what old-school modernists repeatedly threw in malcontents' teeth. The latter failed to make clear what they meant when using, for example, the name 'Christ'. As Walloon Reformed minister C.G. Chavannes (1832-1909) recapitulated in a 1907 article in *Teekenen des Tijds*, 'Christ' did not completely coincide with Jesus the Nazarene in malcontent thinking, but could, on the other hand, not be separated from the historical Jesus either. 'Christ' was no bodiless 'person', but did not merely refer to abstract principles of life either. What then was this mysterious entity called 'Christ'? And why, Chavannes further asked, did malcontents bracket this 'Christ' together with "the terminology of old religious doctrine," such as 'atonement', 'redemption', 'redeemer' and 'saviour'?<sup>103</sup> Although it remained unclear to old-school modernists what their malcontent fellow modernists actually believed, it was in any case obvious that the latter did not attach the same meaning to those terms as orthodox Protestants. While they might consider the Christ they were talking of to be an essential element of one's relationship with God, malcontents still agreed with

<sup>98</sup> C.P., 'Iets over traditioneele termen', *Ibid.* 1902-41 (11 October 1902), 323-324.

<sup>99</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Haarlem', *Ibid.* 1905-24 (17 June 1905), 188; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De Remonstrantsche Gemeente te Haarlem', *Ibid.* 1905-41 (14 October 1905), 323-324; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Te Haarlem', *Ibid.* 1905-45 (11 November 1905), 357; Barnard, *Van "verstoten kind" tot belijdende kerk*, 178-184.

<sup>100</sup> 'Dr. A.H. Haentjens 3 april tachtig jaar', *Haarlems Dagblad* LXX.70 (23 March 1956), 17.

<sup>101</sup> Looking ten years back in time, J.J. Bleeker stated in 1915 that malcontents and old-school modernists had clashed so hard in the mid-1900s that a split in the modernist movement had been anything but imaginary. See: J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Modern-godsdienstig en vrijzinnig-christelijk', *De Hervorming* 1915-42 (16 October 1915), 369-370, there 370.

<sup>102</sup> "...een strooming in ons kerkelijk godsdienstig leven, waardoor naar veler meening waarheid en klaarheid ernstig gevaar lopen." Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De zaak-Haentjens', *Ibid.* 1905-38 (23 September 1905), 300. Van Loenen Martinet repeated his criticism at the annual NPB meeting of 1909. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1909-47 (20 November 1907), 371-373, there 371; [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] *Handelingen NPB 1909*, 54-63.

<sup>103</sup> "...de oude terminologie der kerkleer..." Quoted from: C.G. Chavannes, 'Mijmeringen XI. Leeft God nog?', *Teekenen des Tijds* IX (1907), 323-334, there 332. See also: P.A. Vis, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1907-50 (14 December 1907), 398-399; C.G. Chavannes, 'Gezag', *Ibid.* 1908-32 (8 August 1908), 251-252.



other modernists that no ‘mediator’, such as orthodoxy’s Jesus Christ, was needed to approach God. Because they borrowed concepts from orthodoxy without accepting the orthodox world view that was inextricably linked to those concepts, malcontents’ vague use of dogmatic vocabulary, old-school modernists felt, did not simply cause confusion; it was misleading and even insincere.<sup>104</sup> After all, echoing orthodoxy while having a modernist world view could never do full justice to one’s inner life. While sighing that this should be as clear as day to “sensible people,” A. Bruining urged ministers to preach in words that “keep pace with the spiritual development of society in general, and hence [to] convey [religion] to every new generation in forms derived from contemporary thinking and in accordance with contemporary insights.”<sup>105</sup> Only then would religious life be kept ‘fresh’, and would religion be prevented from becoming insignificant in social life. Moreover, as Dutch Reformed minister S.K. Bakker (1875-1918) recalled to his fellow modernists’ minds in 1909 and 1910, the aim of the modernist movement to modernise Christianity also implied that a new language should be sought, in which religious sentiments could find expression. Not being able to do so was a sign of spiritual poverty.<sup>106</sup> Already in 1901, B.C.J. Mosselmans had similarly attacked malcontents by asking: “is the language of the modernist movement poor [in spirit] to such an extent, that we, to express our thoughts and convictions, need to use supernaturalist terminology?”<sup>107</sup>

Malcontents gave an affirmative answer to this question. As L. de Baan and G.J. Heering stated, old-school modernists might say that it was necessary to come up with alternatives for orthodox terminology, but had so far not succeeded in this themselves either. There were still no better words than ‘sin’, ‘grace’ and ‘Christ’ to give expression to religious experiences.<sup>108</sup> Besides, Heering contended, using those terms was not a sign of conservatism or spiritual poverty – on the contrary, while malcontents were willing to look beyond the opinions and beliefs that had circulated in the early modernist movement, Heering accused old-school modernists of venerating the pioneers of modern theology as sacrosanct religious authorities and basing all their thoughts on this one question: “what would Scholten, what would Kuenen have said about this?”<sup>109</sup>

<sup>104</sup> E.g.: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Nog eens “de naam van God”’, *Ibid.* 1901-47 (23 November 1901), 373; Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Goorloofd?’, *Ibid.* 1902-04 (25 January 1902), 28; [H.J. Toxopeüs in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De Noord-Hollandse Predikantenvereniging’, *Ibid.* 1907-23 (8 June 1907), 180; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘In ’t nieuwe jaar’, *Ibid.* 1908-03 (18 January 1908), 18-19, there 19; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Zondebewustzijn’, *Ibid.* 1910-24 (11 June 1910), 185-186, there 186; [K. in:] ‘Dr. De Sopper en “de God van Nederland”’, *Ibid.* 1912-02 (13 January 1912), 11-12; ‘Berichten, enz. – Jezus Christus te Barchem’, *Ibid.* 1912-38 (21 September 1912), 300; [H. de Lang], ‘Redactioneel – Over het gebruikmaken van “orthodoxe” termen’, *Ibid.* 1914-11 (14 March 1914), 87; H. Oort, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Onze God’, *Ibid.* 1924-09 (1 March 1924), 66-67, there 67; K. Vos, ‘De sprekende slang’, *Ibid.* 1925-51 (19 December 1925), 402-403, there 403.

<sup>105</sup> “...dat dit nog aan denkende menschen moet worden herinnerd...” ; “...gelijken tred te doen houden met de ontwikkeling op geestelijk gebied in haar geheel en zoo hem [de godsdienst, TK] aan elk nieuw geslacht te brengen in vormen, ontleend aan het denken, overeenstemmend met de inzichten van zijn tijd.” Quoted from: [A. Bruining in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – “Nieuwe wijn in oude lederen zakken”’, *Ibid.* 1905-05 (4 February 1905), 37.

<sup>106</sup> S.K. Bakker, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Armoede? En waaraan?’, *Ibid.* 1909-50 (11 December 1909), 397-398; S.K. Bakker, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Over “orthodoxe” termen’, *Ibid.* 1910-04 (22 January 1910), 30-31.

<sup>107</sup> “...is de taal der moderne richting zóó arm, dat zij om hare gedachten en overtuigingen uit te spreken, zich van eene supernaturalistische terminologie moet bedienen?” Quoted from: B.C.J. Mosselmans, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Vroomheid’, *Ibid.* 1901-46 (16 November 1901), 366.

<sup>108</sup> G.J. Heering, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Het bezigen van “orthodoxe” termen in de godsdienstprediking’, *Ibid.* 1909-47 (20 November 1909), 375; L. de Baan, ‘Ingezonden stukken – “Jezus Christus te Barchem”’, *Ibid.* 1912-39 (28 September 1912), 313.

<sup>109</sup> “Wat zou Scholten, wat zou Kuenen hiervan gezegd hebben?” Quoted from: G.J. Heering, ‘Zonde en schuld’, *Ibid.* 1913-06 (8 February 1913), 43-44, there 43.

#### 4. Revising the Modernist Identity

In malcontent circles, not only old-school modernists' dislike of the old terminology of orthodoxy was challenged. The term 'modernist' itself came to be severely criticised as well. Because 'modern' was immediately associated with the monism, intellectualism and mere negation of orthodoxy against which malcontents vehemently reacted, there was a strong tendency among them to drop it in favour of the term 'vrijzinnig'.<sup>110</sup> A loan word from German ('*freisinnig*'), 'vrijzinnig' became naturalised in the Dutch language around 1830, denoting a liberal or progressive frame of mind in politics and an undogmatic or latitudinarian attitude of mind in a religious and ecclesial context.<sup>111</sup> It was thus an older term than 'modern', which, as shown in chapter 1, came to refer to a specific school of thought in theology and a specific group in church life only as late as 1857.

The use of the term 'vrijzinnig', one of the fiercest advocates thereof, J.J. Bleeker, explained in 1908, had two advantages compared to the use of 'modern'. First, 'vrijzinnig' lacked the connotation, a negative one in malcontents' eyes, which the term 'modern' had: malcontents "have different sentiments than the older generation of modernists in many respects," Bleeker argued. "[We] are no longer satisfied with what is called 'modern' in the sphere of religious life."<sup>112</sup> Second, because it had been in use already before the term 'modern' came into fashion, the term 'vrijzinnig' enabled malcontents to emphasise that they felt deeply connected and attached to the Christian tradition, that is, to Christianity as it had existed before the emergence of the modernist movement. Old-school modernists tended to somewhat downplay the specifically Christian elements in their piety. Particularly among first-generation modernists, the conviction had been strong that at a certain moment in the future, all humans would adhere to the same faith. Although they saw the Christian tradition as superior to other religious traditions and were convinced that a modernised version of this tradition would be at the basis of the religion of the future, old-school modernists found it more important to accentuate that they had a religious faith as such than to make explicit that their faith was rooted in historical Christianity. It was therefore that the term 'modern' was commonly paired with the general adjective 'godsdienstig' ('religious'). Malcontents, on the other hand, considered being part of the Christian tradition as what defined them as religious beings. Instead of being 'modern-godsdienstig', they, as Bleeker accentuated,

want [to be] '*Vrijzinnig-Christelijk*' [...] In the past, when we had just escaped from a rather superficial orthodoxy, many in our circles nursed the secret hope that all religions in the world could once be encompassed. At present, the truth that Christianity brings us into an idiosyncratic orbit of feelings and thoughts and gives us a particular view of God, the world and life is more

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<sup>110</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 64. As early as 1898, Lutheran minister J.H.A. Michelsen (1838-1918) suggested renaming the annual meeting of modern theologians into 'annual meeting of *vrijzinnige* theologians', because, as he noticed, the term 'modern' had a negative connotation to some. See: [J.H.A. Michelsen in:] 'Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne theologen', *De Hervorming* 1898-17 (23 April 1898), 65-66. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Openlucht-samenkomsten', *Ibid.* 1913-30 (26 July 1913), 235; H.U. Meyboom, "'Modern-godsdienstig' en 'vrijzinnig-christelijk'", *Teekenen des Tijds* XVII (1915), 379-404, there 394.

<sup>111</sup> M. Siegenbeek, 'Gemengde taalkundige bedenkingen', *Taalkundig Magazijn* I.2 (1837), 175-185, there 179.

<sup>112</sup> "...dat het jongere geslacht onder ons in menig opzicht anders voelt dan het oudere..."; "Wat op het terrein van het geloofsleven 'Modern' wordt genoemd, men is er niet langer tevreden mee." Quoted from: J.J. Bleeker, 'Waarom liever "vrijzinnig" dan "modern"', *De Hervorming* 1908-48 (28 November 1908), 378-379.

acknowledged again. And even though the name of Christian has never been relinquished in our circles, it is currently being claimed with more emphasis again.<sup>113</sup>

Bleeker later put forward two additional reasons why the term ‘*modern*’ had had its day and two reasons why it should specifically be replaced by ‘*vrijzinnig-christelijk*’. The formative phase of modernism, he elucidated, had also been its heyday. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century, the term ‘*modern*’ had been the banner under which a spiritless orthodoxy was attacked with much zeal and a revitalisation of church and religious life was enthusiastically pursued. But the late 1900s looked very different from this heyday: by saying that “modernist views were not very new anymore, no longer being as liberating to the one, as daring to the other,” Bleeker implied that the ideas formed in the formative phase of modernism had never been subjected to a thorough revision afterwards, that old-school modernists had even more or less canonised those ideas, and that the term ‘*modern*’ had hence more and more come to stand for conservatism and a lack of vitality. Moreover, as Bleeker believed, many people who lacked a firm belief in God, but who, for one reason or another, wanted to hide their religious indifference or outright unbelief, had eagerly identified themselves as ‘modernists’. With such a large amount of people who were unwilling to contribute to its development in its midst, the modernist movement would never be able to blossom. Bleeker had no doubt that these “suspicious elements” could be filtered out from the modernist movement if those modernists who did have a firm belief in God would adopt the term ‘*vrijzinnig-christelijk*’. Furthermore, by no longer enabling their orthodox counterparts to claim the adjective ‘Christian’ exclusively for themselves, modernists could demonstrate that it was wrong to consider being Christian as synonymous with being orthodox.<sup>114</sup>

Notwithstanding the negative connotation that the adjective ‘*modern*’ had in their circles, malcontents did not reject this term altogether. Although they preferred ‘*vrijzinnig*’, they used the terms ‘*modern*’ and ‘*vrijzinnig*’ interchangeably in practice. Consider, for example, that the current emerging out of their movement, around 1912, was called ‘right-wing modernism’ – not ‘right-wing *vrijzinnigheid*’. Perhaps the term ‘*modern*’ lost some of its negative connotation when it turned out that malcontent thoughts met with growing response in the modernist movement as a whole in the course of the 1900s and 1910s. Moreover, malcontents stressed that they did not want to break with old-school modernists: they theologised on the basis of the same principles.<sup>115</sup> By continuing to use the term ‘*modern*’ next to ‘*vrijzinnig*’, this sense of togetherness found

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<sup>113</sup> “Men wil ‘Vrijzinnig-Christelijk’. [...] Vroeger, toen men pas onder eene niet zeer diepe Orthodoxie uitkwam, was er bij velen in onze kringen de stille hoop om eens al de godsdiensten der wereld te kunnen omvatten. Thans gaan weer meer oogen open voor deze waarheid, dat het Christendom ons brengt in een geheel eigenaardigen kring van gevoelens en gedachten en ons een bepaalden kijk geeft op God, wereld en leven. En al heeft men onder ons den Christennaam nooit prijs gegeven, thans maakt men er weer met meer nadruk aanspraak op.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 379.

<sup>114</sup> “...verdachte elementen...” Quoted from: J.J. Bleeker, “Modern of vrijzinnig-christelijk?”, *Ibid.* 1908-51 (19 December 1908), 403-404, there 404. A similar argument was made in: H. Boschma, ‘Kerkelijk leven – iets over partijnamen’, *De Stroom* V.19 (17 April 1926), 2-3.

<sup>115</sup> E.g.: A. Binnerts Sz., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Wat willen de “malcontenten”?’ , *De Hervorming* 1904-43 (22 October 1904), 342. In 1908, the suggestion was made at the annual NPB meeting in 1908 to include the term ‘*vrijzinnig-christelijk*’ in the articles of association of the NPB. The suggestion was rejected, in order not to alienate old-school modernists from the NPB. This shows that malcontents were not willing to carry the matter of terminology to such an extreme that the modernist movement would disintegrate. See: I. van den Bergh, ‘Nogmaals art. 1’, *Ibid.* 1908-36 (5 September 1908), 282-283; I. van den Bergh, ‘Waarom het gaat bij de wetsherziening’, *Ibid.* 1908-39 (26 September 1908), 305-306; ‘Berichten, enz. – In Enschede’, *Ibid.* 1908-44 (31 October 1908), 348-349, there 349; *Handelingen NPB 1908*, 36-40.

expression. As even Heering, one of the leading men of right-wing modernism, stated in 1912: “I use the terms ‘*modern*’, ‘*vrijzinnig-godsdienstig*’ and ‘*vrijzinnig-christelijk*’ indiscriminately, the first particularly in reference to our theology, the other two in reference to our religious life.” Contrary to old-school modernist G. de Leeuw (1873-1941), he did not believe that these terms mutually excluded each other.<sup>116</sup>

Malcontents were not the only ones in the modernist movement for whom it was not self-evident to label themselves as ‘*modern*’. There were two other groups that should be discerned from malcontents in which the use of the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ was encouraged as well. The first of these groups consisted of those members of the Dutch Reformed Church who, as further discussed in chapter 4, organised themselves into local and provincial branches, which, contrary to NPB branches, were not open to members of other church denominations, in the 1900s and early 1910s. They called themselves ‘*vrijzinnig-hervormden*’ and not ‘*modern-hervormden*’, because they considered the term ‘*modern*’ to be ‘besmirched’ in an ecclesial context. Among non-modernist members of the Dutch Reformed Church and the general public, modernists had the reputation of depriving people of their faith and literally preaching them out of the church.<sup>117</sup> It was hence seen as basically impossible to exert any appeal on potential new sympathisers under the banner with the word ‘*modern*’ sewn on it. This was not only the result of a consistent and very successful orthodox campaign of slander against modernists; the latter, the initiators of the movement of ‘*vrijzinnig-hervormden*’ felt, were to blame for it themselves as well. For a long time, modernists had been reluctant to organise themselves too tightly – not only in the Dutch Reformed Church, but, as Kuenen’s initial objections against the NPB exemplified, also in general. They did not want to be a separate ‘party’ or ‘faction’, fearing that party discipline would inevitably prevail over individual considerations. For a long time, anti-ecclesial voices, such as Van Loenen Martinet’s, had been nearly unchallenged in the modernist press. Furthermore, the turnout at and sense of involvement with church council elections had been consistently lower among modernists than in orthodox circles. As a result, the term ‘*modern*’ had come to stand for an indifferent or even antagonistic attitude towards ecclesial matters. ‘*Modern*’ was, as malcontent Remonstrant Heering also put forward in the quote above, first and foremost a theological term, referring to specific hermeneutical and exegetical principles. ‘*Vrijzinnig*’, on the contrary, did not primarily refer to a particular kind of theology, but rather to a commitment to doctrinal freedom within a church framework. Because the movement of ‘*vrijzinnig-hervormden*’ did not defend the legitimacy of modernist theological views as such, but rather the legitimacy to adhere to such views in the Dutch Reformed Church, its leaders must have considered ‘*vrijzinnig*’ to be a better term in the context of inner-church politics than ‘*modern*’.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> “Ik voor mij gebruik de namen *modern*, *vrijzinnig-godsdienstig* en *vrijzinnig-christelijk* door elkaar, den eersten doorgaans meer voor onze theologie, de beide laatste meer voor onze godsdienst.” Quoted from: G.J. Heering, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Wie vergist zich?’, *De Hervorming* 1912-43 (26 October 1912), 348. See also: G. de Leeuw, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Vrijzinnig christendom en moderne richting’, *Ibid.* 1912-45 (9 November 1912), 368-369.

<sup>117</sup> E.g.: Frisius, ‘Binnenland – Uit Friesland’, *De Tijd* 1904-17226 (22 April 1904), 5; ‘Berichten, enz. – Uit “De Westlander”’, *De Hervorming* 1904-43 (22 October 1904), 340.

<sup>118</sup> E.g.: C. Boerendonk, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Verba valent usu’, *Ibid.* 1912-47 (23 November 1912), 383-384; ‘Redactioneel – N.-Hollandsche Predikantenvereniging’, *Ibid.* 1914-29 (18 July 1914), 250; [J.P. Cannegieter in:] H.J. Toxopeüs, ‘Rondom de vergadering van moderne theologen’, *Ibid.* 1925-18 (1 May 1925), 138-140, there 139. In 1908, Van Loenen Martinet noticed that those who presented themselves as ‘*vrijzinnigen*’ in the Dutch Reformed

Church historian Klooster thinks that the inner-church movement of Reformed liberals got the label ‘*vrijzinnig*’ instead of ‘*modern*’ due to a strong malcontent influence.<sup>119</sup> This, however, is rather unlikely. The initiator of what ultimately became the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Nederland* (Association of Reformed Liberals in the Netherlands or vvH), C.J. Niemeijer, was anything but malcontent-minded.<sup>120</sup> Those who had founded the very first inner-church organisation of Reformed liberals, in Leiden in 1897, seven years before Niemeijer’s founding of the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Friesland* marked the emergence of local associations of Reformed liberals in municipalities other than Leiden, and two years after the rise of the pre-malcontent movement of ‘mystical youngsters’, belonged to the fiercest defendants of old-school modernist theological views as well. These men, among whom were W.C. van Manen and H. Oort, had decided to organise themselves separately within the Dutch Reformed community in Leiden, because the local church council had been unwilling to appoint a modernist minister. Cherishing the ideal of the Dutch Reformed Church as ‘*volkskerk*’, about which chapter 4 deals in more detail, they had not wanted to join the local Remonstrant congregation. Entrenching themselves within the NPB had not been an option either, due to the fear that the NPB might turn out to function as a stepping stone for Reformed liberals to this Remonstrant congregation.<sup>121</sup> The separate liberal Reformed organisation in Leiden had probably received the name ‘*vrijzinnig*’ instead of ‘*modern*’, because the former had a more explicitly ecclesial connotation. Its creation had established a precedent for Niemeijer; the first Reformed modernists who had organised themselves separately had adopted the name ‘*vrijzinnig*’ and he, who wanted modernist members of the Dutch Reformed Church in the entire country to do the same as these modernists in Leiden had done in 1897, followed them in that.<sup>122</sup>

When the *evangelische* theologian J. Offerhaus (1831-1926) asked him in 1904 why he labelled his movement of Reformed liberals ‘*vrijzinnig*’, Niemeijer answered that this adjective was ‘broader’ than ‘*modern*’. In contradiction to this, he stressed that the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Friesland* was meant to include modernists, not *evangelischen* and *ethisch-hervormden*.<sup>123</sup> In Friesland, he and one of his sympathisers elucidated, modernists

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Church took a different stance in church affairs than modernists in former times. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De vergadering van vrijzinnigen’, *Ibid.* 1908-19 (9 May 1908), 148; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 92.

<sup>119</sup> Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 57. As Heering stresses, the *vrijzinnig-hervormde* movement emerged and developed independent of the movement of malcontents. See: Heering, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd’, 85-86. This is not to say that there were no malcontents among the *vrijzinnig-hervormden*.

<sup>120</sup> C.J. Niemeijer, ‘Kroniek’, *Teekenen des Tijds* VI (1904), 413-418; C.J. Niemeijer, ‘Kroniek’, *Ibid.* XI (1909), 146-165, there 146-163; G.J. Heering, ‘Misverstand’, *De Hervorming* 1913-11 (15 March 1911), 82-83, there 83.

<sup>121</sup> W.C. van Manen, *Wat nu? Aan de vrijzinnige leden der Ned. Herv. gemeente te Leiden: een voorstel* (Leiden 1897); [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Domme dreigementen’, *De Hervorming* 1897-23 (5 June 1897), 90; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Leiden’, *Ibid.* 1897-43 (23 October 1897), 170; W.C. van Manen, ‘Een eigen kring’, *Ibid.* 1897-44 (30 October 1897), 174; ‘Binnenland – Uit Leiden’, *Ibid.* 1897-44 (30 October 1897), 175; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Leiden’, *Ibid.* 1899-13 (1 April 1899), 50; H.G. Hagen, *Mijne verhouding tot de vrijzinnige hervormden te Leiden* (Leiden 1899); K.M. Witteveen, ‘Honderd jaar Vrijzinnig Hervormd in Leiden’, in: K.P. Baljon-van den Ende et al., *Honderd jaar vrijzinnigheid in het Leidse. Jubileumuitgave bij het eeuwfeest van de Vereniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden Leiden/Oegstgeest* (Leiden and Oegstgeest 1998), 9-85, there 15-20.

<sup>122</sup> The Leiden association joined the national vvH, due to financial difficulties, only in 1924. See: Witteveen, ‘Honderd jaar Vrijzinnig Hervormd in Leiden’, 33.

<sup>123</sup> J. van Loenen Martinet noticed this contradiction as well. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Tweeërlei bezwaar’, *De Hervorming* 1904-18 (30 April 1904), 141.

were the only ones who upheld the principle of doctrinal freedom and hence the only ones who truly deserved the honorary title ‘vrijzinnig’.<sup>124</sup> However, as the term ‘vrijzinnig’ was broader than ‘modern’, it did leave open the possibility of welcoming non-modernists in the *vrijzinnig-hervormde* movement. B.D. Eerdmans straightforwardly admitted this during a meeting of Reformed liberals in The Hague in 1905.<sup>125</sup> Outside of Friesland, some provincial associations of *vrijzinnig-hervormden* did indeed include *evangelischen*.<sup>126</sup>

The argument that ‘vrijzinnig’ could, contrary to ‘modern’, be interpreted as broad enough to also include *evangelischen* and *ethisch-orthodoxen* was the incentive for a third group within the modernist movement, next to malcontents and *vrijzinnig-hervormden*, to embrace it. This group, centred around the so-called ‘*Eenheidsbeweging*’ (‘Unity Movement’) in the early 1910s and referred to by the adjective ‘*algemeen-vrijzinnig*’ as of the mid-1910s, tried to efface existing factional dividing lines based on theological differences by bringing about a cross-factional community spirit based on a shared sense of piety. Though malcontents were also seeking rapprochement to *evangelischen* and *ethisch-orthodoxen*, this group should be discerned from malcontents, as the latter’s theological views were not generally accepted among those modernists who belonged to it.<sup>127</sup> If he could be called a ‘malcontent’ at all, G.H. van Senden, the most prominent representative of this group of modernists, was, theologically speaking, definitely a loner in malcontent circles.<sup>128</sup> The initiator of the *Eenheidsbeweging* was not Van Senden, but his fellow Dutch Reformed minister M. Beversluis (1856-1948). The fact that Beversluis counted himself among the *evangelischen* indicates that the attempt at cross-factional conciliation was not solely a modernist endeavour. In a 1910 lecture, Beversluis argued that the rigid distinction between modernists, *evangelischen* and *ethisch-orthodoxen* was out of date and misleading. Out of date, because fundamental differences had emerged *within* each of these three factions, while the theological differences that had led to the formation of these

<sup>124</sup> C.J. Niemeijer, ‘Kroniek’, *Teekenen des Tijds* VI (1904), 91-108, there 98-99; B., ‘Ingezonden stukken – De vrijzinnigen in Friesland’, *De Hervorming* 1904-29 (11 June 1904), 189; C.J. Niemeijer, ‘Kroniek’, *Teekenen des Tijds* VIII (1906), 223-239, there 227-237. See also: K.A. Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw. Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van de vrijzinnig hervormde beweging* (Assen 1953), 49-50; Jansen, “‘Teekenen des Tijds’”, 19. Some *evangelischen* established an inner-church organisation of their own, the *Nederlandsche Evangelische Vereeniging* (Dutch *Evangelische* Association), in 1914, due to which collaboration of *evangelischen* to the vvH remained incidental and the term ‘vrijzinnig’ became synonymous with ‘modern’ in an ecclesial context. See: Klooster, *Groninger Godgeleerdheid in Friesland*, 294.

<sup>125</sup> ‘Kerknieuws’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1905-10990 (28 October 1905), 13. See also: I. van den Bergh, ‘Vrijzinnig christendom’, *De Hervorming* 1909-49 (4 December 1909), 385-386; “‘Vrijzinnig’”, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIX.28301 (11 January 1916), evening paper, 6; ‘Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden’, *Nieuwsblad van het Noorden* XXXIX.271 (17 November 1926), 9; ‘De positie der evangelischen’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXVI.270 (29 September 1929), morning paper C, 2.

<sup>126</sup> In any case in the provinces of South Holland, Overijssel, Drenthe, Groningen and North Brabant/Limburg. See: C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Overdreven bezwaren’, *De Hervorming* 1909-50 (11 December 1909), 398-399, there 398; Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 50-55. Although modernists and *evangelischen* occasionally joined forces in defence of doctrinal freedom, they continued to have a different outlook on faith itself. E.g.: J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – De vrijzinnige hervormden op nieuwe wegen’, *Het Vaderland* (3 April 1924), evening paper B, 1.

<sup>127</sup> ‘Redactioneel – Algemeen vrijzinnig’, *De Hervorming* 1916-28 (8 July 1916), 236-237; ‘Kerknieuws – Algemeen vrijzinnig’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXIII.186 (4 July 1916), morning paper A, 3.

<sup>128</sup> He even explicitly criticised malcontents in: G.H. van Senden, *Het vraagstuk van rechtzinnigheid en vrijzinnigheid* (Baarn 1912). C.E. Hooykaas did include him among the malcontents. See: C.E. Hooykaas, ‘Godsdienstig leven in Nederland LII. Partijverhoudingen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXV.27029 (13 July 1912), evening paper, 9.

factions no longer entirely applied. Misleading, because the factional division caused right-wing modernists, *evangelischen* and left-wing *ethischen* to neither acknowledge their congeniality nor appreciate each other's intentions. Beversluis therefore advocated the creation of an ecclesial centre party, "taking position against strict confessionalism on the right, against cold naturalism on the left."<sup>129</sup> At a meeting Beversluis convened in April 1911 to effectuate this plan, the majority of the persons present nonetheless opposed him, feeling that such a centre party would serve no purpose and could not exist without more underlying theological consensus.<sup>130</sup> They did want to increase the sense of togetherness among the different factions, for the pursuit of which an '*algemeene predikantenvergadering*' ('general meeting of ministers') was called into being. As Beversluis put himself out of action by continuing to urge for party formation,<sup>131</sup> Van Senden set himself up as the new leader of the *Eenheidsbeweging*.

Mennonite minister M. Huizinga, Jr. (1876-1959) characterised the principle on which the *Eenheidsbeweging* was founded as '*vrijzinnig*': the movement was only open to people who acknowledged that every theological statement is nothing more than a subjective expression of the experience of God and who accordingly recognised that true piety does not depend on adherence to certain dogmas.<sup>132</sup> Contrary to malcontents, whose '*vrijzinnigheid*' was basically modernism voiced in traditional Christian terms, and men such as Niemeijer, for whom '*vrijzinnig*' had an inherently ecclesial connotation, Huizinga thus argued that being '*vrijzinnig*' all came down to having the attitude he described above. Van Senden showed agreement with this. When he failed to attract more sympathisers for the *Eenheidsbeweging*, which was, as far as his fellow modernists were concerned, particularly due to a scathing judgment he had passed on the modernist movement in a 1912 brochure,<sup>133</sup> Van Senden began to present himself as '*algemeen-vrijzinnig*'. With this term, he meant to express that, although fully accepting modernist hermeneutical principles, he felt connected to everyone in whose faith some of his own piety shined through. He therefore could not unconditionally support the modernist movement as a whole; he could only sympathise with individual modernists insofar as their piety resembled his.<sup>134</sup> *Algemeen-vrijzinnigen*, as one of Van Senden's supporters further explained, open-mindedly listened to others' testimonies of faith, regardless of the times these others lived in, the concepts of God they had, or even the religious traditions they belonged to. An *algemeen-vrijzinnige* looked beyond Puritans', Roman Catholics' and non-Christians' *conceptions* of God and focused on their *experiences* of the divine. *Vrijzinnigheid* was an attitude of mind, manifesting itself in religious life, in the broadest sense, through the ages. Those who possessed this attitude of

<sup>129</sup> "...die rechts tegenover het strakke Confessionalisme en links tegenover het koude Naturalisme positie nam..." Quoted from: M. Beversluis, *De onzuiverheid der hedendaagsche partijverhoudingen op godsdienstig gebied. Voor- dracht, gehouden in de Predikanten-Vergadering te Groningen, op 27 september 1910* (Groningen 1910), 8, 37. The quote is on p. 37. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Een centumpartij', *De Hervorming* 1911-07 (18 February 1911), 51.

<sup>130</sup> M. Huizinga, Jr., 'De "Eenheidsbeweging"', *Ibid.* 1911-50 (16 December 1911), 397-398; 1911-52 (30 December 1911), 415-416; M. Huizinga, Jr., *Toch eenheid! Mijn voorstel aan de vergadering der zoogenaamde Eenheids- beweging* (Groningen 1912), 6-13.

<sup>131</sup> As expressed in: M. Beversluis, *De Eenheidsbeweging. Open brief aan alle predikanten* (Groningen 1912).

<sup>132</sup> M. Huizinga, Jr., 'De "Eenheidsbeweging"', *De Hervorming* 1911-52 (30 December 1911), 415-416, there 415.

<sup>133</sup> Van Senden, *Het vraagstuk van rechtzinnigheid en vrijzinnigheid*. See also: Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 277, note 39.

<sup>134</sup> Van Senden, *Het vraagstuk van rechtzinnigheid en vrijzinnigheid*; [G.H. van Senden in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Dr. Van Senden's brochure', *De Hervorming* 1912-30 (27 July 1912), 235.

mind immediately recognised it when they came across someone else, either a historical figure or a contemporary, who possessed it as well. Confessionalists certainly lacked it, but many modernists did too.<sup>135</sup>

Modernists who neither identified with malcontents nor with the *vrijzinnig-hervormde* current, nor with Van Senden's *algemeen-vrijzinnigen*, were sceptical about the growing use of the term '*vrijzinnig*' in their circles. To someone such as Bleeker, they riposted that if he and his fellow malcontents did not want to leave the modernist movement, there was no reason to favour the use of '*vrijzinnig*' as a term. While this adjective was meaningless in itself, even in combination with the word '*christelijk*', as it could apply to basically any Protestant with a liberal, non-confessionalist frame of mind, the term '*modern*' only applied to those who had an anti-supernatural outlook on life, among whom malcontents still counted themselves.<sup>136</sup> To men such as Niemeijer, modernists preferring the term '*modern*' called out not to understand why '*vrijzinnig*' was chosen as the label for an inner-church organisation that was originally exclusively, and later primarily, meant to target modernists. Was it not confusing not to call a spade simply a spade?<sup>137</sup> And to Van Senden and his sympathisers, modernists cherishing the adjective '*modern*' argued that they did not differ as much from the *algemeen-vrijzinnigen* as the latter believed.<sup>138</sup> As some of these modernists implied, they were not inclined to replace the term '*modern*' because they understood that such a replacement would mark the definitive death of the grand idea and expectations contained in this term. '*Modern*' was the banner under which fierce battles against orthodoxy had been waged, and the synonymy of being religious with going to church had been challenged; it stood for the dedication to modernise Christianity and the conviction that the principles of this modernised Christianity would eventually entirely permeate religious and social life.<sup>139</sup> The criticism of those groups within the modernist movement that referred to themselves as '*vrijzinnig*' was exactly directed against this antithetical attitude towards orthodoxy, ambiguous relation to the church, pretension and triumphalism that the term '*modern*' connoted. For those sticking to this term, on the other hand, the elements contained in it had a positive connotation, reminding them of the glorious emergence of modernism in the mid-nineteenth century and inspiring them to keep to the path that the earliest modernists had paved.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>135</sup> 'Kerknieuws – Algemeen vrijzinnig', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXIII.186 (4 July 1916), morning paper A, 3. See also: 'Redactioneel – Algemeen vrijzinnig', *De Hervorming* 1916-28 (8 July 1916), 236-237, there 237.

<sup>136</sup> E.g.: 'Berichten, enz. – Vrijzinnig of modern?', *Ibid.* 1907-17 (27 April 1907), 132; L.N. de Jong, 'Waar moet de grens getrokken worden?', *Ibid.* 1908-22 (30 May 1908), 170; I. van den Bergh, 'Modern of vrijzinnig-christelijk?', *Ibid.* 1908-49 (5 December 1908), 387-388, there 387; C.G. Chavannes, 'Óf – óf', *Ibid.* 1909-01 (2 January 1909), 3-4, there 4.

<sup>137</sup> E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Tweeërlei bezwaar', *Ibid.* 1904-18 (30 April 1904), 141; "'Vrijzinnig'", *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIX.28301 (11 January 1916), evening paper, 6.

<sup>138</sup> E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Dr. Van Senden's brochure en "de moderne vaders"', *De Hervorming* 1912-31 (3 August 1912), 243-244; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Gemeenten en predikanten, die niet bij elkaar passen', *Ibid.* 1917-24 (16 June 1917), 196-197, there 196.

<sup>139</sup> As P. Smits summarises, the term '*modern*' gave expression to the idea of liberal Protestants as a cultural avant-garde. See: P. Smits, *De identiteitsimpasse van het vrijzinnig protestantisme. Oorzaken en consequenties* (Kampen 1989), 16.

<sup>140</sup> E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De vergadering van vrijzinnigen', *De Hervorming* 1908-19 (9 May 1908), 148; I. van den Bergh, 'Modern of vrijzinnig-christelijk?', *Ibid.* 1908-49 (5 December 1908), 387-388, there 387; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Een opheldering', *Ibid.* 1908-49 (5 December 1908), 388-389; G. de Leeuw, 'Ingezonden stukken – Vrijzinnig christendom en moderne richting', *Ibid.* 1912-45 (9 November 1912), 368-369; H.U. Meyboom, "'Modern-godsdienstig" en "vrijzinnig-christelijk"', *Teekenen des Tijds* XVII



Nonetheless, the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ did find more and more acceptance throughout the whole of the modernist movement in the 1900s and 1910s, evincing that the groups favouring this term increased in importance. Moreover, in spite of its broader meaning, it had basically become completely synonymous with ‘*modern*’ in an ecclesial and theological context in the late 1910s – by then, both terms were used interchangeably in the modernist movement, with ‘*vrijzinnig*’ being used most often.<sup>141</sup> This shows that the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ did not catch on among *evangelischen*, with the exception of those who joined the ranks of the *vrijzinnig-hervormde* current, and *ethisch-orthodoxen*. R.H. Drijber (1850-1939), editor-in-chief of the *Evangelisch Zondagsblad* and chairman of the *Nederlandsche Evangelische Vereeniging*, urged his fellow *evangelischen* in 1916 to call themselves ‘*vrijzinnig*’ only in reference to their rejection of a strict enforcement of the Three Forms of Unity in the Dutch Reformed Church, not in any other context.<sup>142</sup> For *evangelischen*, it was out of the question to entirely drop the existing factional nomenclature and unconditionally present themselves under a common label with modernists, abhorrent as they were of the latter’s anti-supernatural outlook on Jesus the Nazarene. *Ethischen* would never even refer to themselves as ‘*vrijzinnig*’ in *any* context. Although they were just as much attacked by the guardians of the Three Forms of Unity as modernists and *evangelischen*, and thus had joint ecclesial interests with these groups, they continued to see themselves as orthodox and did not want to give the impression of tolerating modernist views in the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>143</sup>

The increasing use of the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ among modernists, and only among them, also denotes something else. It was not a coincidence that this trend occurred when, as analysed in chapter 2, a growing feeling of being marginalised manifested itself in the modernist movement. In reaction to this, some modernist opinion makers admitted that modernists’ direct influence on religious life might be limited, but boasted that their *indirect* influence was in fact considerable. Time and again these opinion leaders accentuated that, although these groups were unwilling to admit it, *evangelischen* and *ethischen* had integrated a good deal of modernist ideas into their theology – even to such an extent that, though their interpretations and images of the divine might be different from those of modernists, it was legitimate to claim that they fell under the latter’s sphere of influence.<sup>144</sup> These opinion leaders fed the conviction in modernist

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(1915), 379-404; A. Bruining, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Het modernisme en de modus vivendi’, *De Hervorming* 1916-35 (26 August 1916), 298.

<sup>141</sup> J.J. Bleeker, ‘Waarom liever “vrijzinnig” dan “modern”’, *Ibid.* 1908-48 (28 November 1908), 378-379, there 378; C.E. Hooykaas, ‘Godsdienstig leven in Nederland I. Orthodox en modern’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIII.26425 (9 November 1910), evening paper, 9; M. Beversluis, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Het positieve element in de vrijzinnigheid’, *De Hervorming* 1919-11 (15 March 1919), 41; 1919-12 (22 March 1919), 45-46.

<sup>142</sup> “‘Vrijzinnig’”, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIX.28301 (11 January 1916), evening paper, 6. The *evangelische* minister B. Klein Wassink (1874-1946) had made a similar plea in 1911. See: ‘Uit het kerkelijk leven – De evangelischen’, *De Waarheidsvriend* II.13 (24 February 1911), 2. In the city of Groningen, the factional dividing lines between modernists and *evangelischen* were completely wiped out when both groups formulated a communal theological declaration, on the basis of which they formed the *Algemeen Vrijzinnig-Hervormde Vereeniging* (General Liberal Reformed Association) in 1912. See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 72, note 1.

<sup>143</sup> Only in Dordrecht, in 1910, did modernists and *ethischen* collaborate in ecclesial affairs, to ensure that they could both appoint their own ministers. See: C.E. Hooykaas, ‘Godsdienstig leven in Nederland I. Orthodox en modern’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIII.26425 (9 November 1910), evening paper, 9. See also: C.E. Hooykaas, ‘Godsdienstig leven in Nederland VIII’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIV.26515 (8 February 1911), evening paper, 9.

<sup>144</sup> E.g.: C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Hoe lang hinkt gij nog op twee gedachten?’, *De Hervorming* 1905-42 (21 October 1905), 331-332; A. Bruining, ‘Berichten, enz. – Een zich vormende legende’, *Ibid.* 1906-28 (14 July 1906), 221; H.A. van Bakel, *Ethische orthodoxie en modernisme* (Amersfoort 1907), 27; C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Overdreven bezwaren’, *De Hervorming* 1909-50 (11 December 1909), 398-399, there 399; I. van den Bergh, ‘Rich-

circles that modernists proper, *evangelischen* and *ethischen* essentially all belonged to one and the same current, the name of which, ‘*vrijzinnig*’, should be preferred over the old factional names.<sup>145</sup>

As said, one of the reasons for *vrijzinnig-hervormden* not to label their movement as ‘modernist’ had to do with the anti-ecclesial connotation this last word had. An increasing appreciation of the institution of the church in modernist circles, a trend for which the term ‘ecclesial turn’ has been coined in chapter 2, was, however, not restricted to *vrijzinnig-hervormden*. Compared to old-school modernists, malcontents attached greater value to the ecclesial character of Christianity. And although *algemeen-vrijzinnigen* questioned whether the church would still have a central position in religious life in the future, they, as one of them stressed, in any case expected much more for the development of religious life from the Dutch Reformed Church in its current, varicoloured shape, than from a disintegration of this same church along existing factional lines or from any other church community. Because they also felt congenial to others than modernists, *algemeen-vrijzinnigen* did not like the prospect of being in a church community solely or largely consisting of the latter, such as a potential Liberal Reformed Church or one of the smaller, already existing Protestant churches.<sup>146</sup> According to Niemeijer, the resurgent ecclesial consciousness in modernist Reformed circles in the early twentieth century was fuelled by the perception that Remonstrants, Mennonites and Lutherans seemed to care more about the numerical growth of their own churches than about the reinforcement of liberal Protestantism as an influence in social life as such.<sup>147</sup> Chapter 4 focuses on this matter in more detail. Here it is sufficient to note that, coinciding and connected with Reformed modernists’ growing focus on their own church denomination, the ecclesial consciousness did indeed intensify among non-Reformed modernists as well. More assertively than they had done in the nineteenth century, the latter began to emphasise the presumed ‘singular’ character of their respective denominations. In liberal Lutheran circles, this singularity was sought in the person of Luther – it was his footsteps in which liberal Lutherans, more explicitly

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tingen en partijen’, *Ibid.* 1910-49 (3 December 1910), 385-386; C. Boerendonk, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Verba valent usu’, *Ibid.* 1912-46 (16 November 1912), 377; J.J. Bleeker, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Wat voorbijgaat en wat blijft’, *Ibid.* 1916-24 (10 June 1916), 198; K.H. Roessingh, ‘Leestafel – Uit de tijdschriften van rechtzinnige zijde’, *Ibid.* 1917-35 (1 September 1917), 289-290; M. Beversluis, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Het positieve element in de vrijzinnigheid’, *Ibid.* 1919-11 (15 March 1919), 41; 1919-12 (22 March 1919), 45-46; G.A. van der Giesen, ‘Ingezonden – Samenwerking van vrijzinnigen en ethischen’, *Ibid.* 1922-05 (4 February 1922), 38; J. Koekebakker, ‘De enquête over gemeentelieven’, *Ibid.* 1926-05 (30 January 1926), 33-35, there 33.

<sup>145</sup> E.g.: A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘De ethische richting’, *Teekenen des Tijds* XIV (1912), 247-277. An anonymous article writer in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* saw a connection between what he called the “*minderwaardigheidsgevoel*” (“feeling of inferiority”) and the growing use of the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ in modernist circles. Modernists, he alleged, knew perfectly well that they could only continue to exist as a current in the Dutch Reformed Church by the grace of the *ethischen*, as these had a centre position – and therewith a *key* position – in church life. They therefore propagated the use of the term ‘*vrijzinnigen*’ as an umbrella term for modernists, *evangelischen* and *ethischen*. To reinforce the claim that these three groups belonged together as ‘*vrijzinnigen*’, modernists invited *ethischen* as guest lecturers at their meetings. The latter, in turn, did not allow modernists to speak at their gatherings. See: ‘Kerknieuws – Het minderwaardigheidsgevoel der modernen’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXII.29 (29 January 1925), evening paper A, 1. Because only modernists presented themselves as ‘*vrijzinnigen*’, ‘*modern*’ and ‘*vrijzinnig*’ more or less became synonyms.

<sup>146</sup> ‘Kerknieuws – Algemeen vrijzinnig’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIII.186 (4 July 1916), morning paper A, 3.

<sup>147</sup> C.J. Niemeijer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XV. *De vrijzinnige hervormden* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 7. See also: A. Binnerts Sz., ‘Ingezonden stukken – De vrijzinnigen en de kerkgenootschappen’, *De Hervorming* 1902-14 (5 April 1902), 109-110; A. Binnerts Sz., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1903-10 (7 March 1903), 77-78.

than other modernists, wanted to tread.<sup>148</sup> The Remonstrant Brotherhood was said to have a singular character because, in a rather anachronistic interpretation of the seventeenth-century controversy between the Arminian and Gomarian factions in the Dutch Reformed Church, its founders had supposedly all been ‘liberal-minded’, and because it was the only church community in which modernists had nothing to fear from orthodoxy.<sup>149</sup> Mennonites, finally, had always felt rather different from other modernists, as they rejected infant baptism. The malcontents among them claimed that Mennonites’ theological singularity even went further: after all, as P.H. Veen, Jr. (1867-1933) argued, the theologians by whom malcontents felt inspired, Hoekstra and De Bussy, had a Mennonite background.<sup>150</sup> It is striking to see that while modernists generally blamed orthodoxy for clinging to historical practices and beliefs, the assumed singularity of the various modernist church communities could only be defended on *historical* grounds – no Reformed, Remonstrant, Lutheran or Mennonite modernist was apparently able to make clear why his own liberal Protestant faith was any different from that of modernists belonging to another church.<sup>151</sup> Due to the resurgent ecclesial consciousness, the modernist movement did not look the same as it had before 1900.

## 5. Laying Down the Modernist Identity

As a consequence of the rise of malcontentism, the urge to no longer characterise modernism simply as a negation of orthodoxy, but to formulate it in a positive way became stronger. And as a consequence of the ‘ecclesial turn’, the acknowledgement that no faith community could do without some kind of doctrinal frame of reference grew as well. Both processes eventually resulted in a rising call for a modernist confession of faith. Already in 1873, Dutch Reformed minister F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen (1826-1895) had called for such a document, in order to give lie to the many false characteristics orthodoxy attributed to modernists. “The general public outside of our circles,” he had argued, “knows what we do *not* want, but that is it! In result, many believe, in good faith, that we live by negations alone.”<sup>152</sup> However, drawing up a confession of faith was a peculiar thought at the time. As Mosselmans and Van Gilse, voicing the then general modernist opinion, had replied several weeks after Sibmacher Zijnen’s plea, the need for doctrinal unity among the faithful by formulating a creed was a Roman Catholic principle. Unfortunately, sixteenth-century Calvinists had stuck to this principle, failing to see

<sup>148</sup> E.g.: [H.A. van Bakel in:] ‘Stadsnieuws – Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Lutherschen’, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* XLIX.14897 (16/17 October 1926), 9.

<sup>149</sup> E.g.: J.A. Beijerman, *De Remonstrantsche Broederschap* (Baarn 1907), 45-46; R. Miedema, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Misverstand versterkt in plaats van weggenomen!’, *De Hervorming* 1918-08 (23 February 1918), 31; G.J. Heering, ‘Oorsprong en karakter der Remonstrantsche Broederschap’, in: G.J. Heering, L.J. van Holk and W.J. Wegerif, *De Remonstrantsche Broederschap. Wat zij is en wat zij wil* (Lochem 1928), 1-5; S. Vuyk, *Het einde der remonstranten. Arminius als mythe: vrijheid en verdraagzaamheid bij de remonstranten als probleem* (Kampen 2012), 55-60.

<sup>150</sup> E.g.: P.H. Veen, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1909-30 (24 July 1909), 237.

<sup>151</sup> Although he actively participated in the *Algemeene Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Lutherschen* (General Association of Liberal Lutherans), A.C. Schade van Westrum stated that none of the modernist church communities had a singular character: the ministers who served them all gave similar sermons. See: A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Recht of reden van bestaan’, *Ibid.* 1921-23 (11 June 1921), 181-182; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Hoofdartikel – Wenschelijk, noodzakelijk, mogelijk’, *Ibid.* 1922-25 (24 June 1922), 193-195; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Het eigene’, *Ibid.* 1923-21 (26 May 1923), 164-165.

<sup>152</sup> “*Het groote publiek buiten ons weet wel wat wij niet willen, maar meer ook niet! – Van daar dat menigeen ter goeder trouw waant dat wij alleen van negatiën leven.*” Quoted from: F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen, ““Geen Constituanten””, *Ibid.* 1873-04 (13 February 1873), 2.

that people's spiritual well-being did not depend on their endorsement of several dogmas, but on the vocation of the church to enlighten and ennoble them. It was up to modernists to eliminate this misconception. "We want to be Protestant rather than Reformed or Lutheran or Mennonite or Remonstrant," Mosselmans and Van Gilse had exclaimed. "Protestantism and ecclesial creedalism are incompatible. [...] It is unchristian to judge a brother by the standard of doctrine." The unity of the church did not rest on doctrinal concurrence, but solely on Christians' shared experience of the manifestation of the Holy Spirit in their inner selves.<sup>153</sup> This line of reasoning had continued to be dominant in the modernist movement throughout the last quarter of the nineteenth century; as late as 1897, for example, H. Oort had rejected with general approval the need to pin people's faith down on dogmatic formulae. It was impossible to formulate a doctrinal document that did justice to more than one person's experience of the divine. One's personal faith could find expression only in individually chosen words.<sup>154</sup> Yet now, in the early twentieth century, anti-creedalism was becoming a less self-evident characteristic of the modernist movement.

It was no coincidence that it was L. Knappert who, in 1903, launched a discussion on the desirability of a modernist confession of faith. After all, he had been one of the first to openly criticise old-school modernism for its lack of concern for the Dutch Reformed Church and the inherently human need for salvation. As such, he inspired both the movement of malcontents – J. Lindeboom would even depict him as the 'godfather' of malcontentism<sup>155</sup> – and the organisation of *vrijzinnig-hervormden*. In a series of articles in *De Hervorming*, Knappert denounced modernists' general inability to make clear what they believed in. This was so because they, seeking new forms – including a new vocabulary – to give shape to religious life, tended to speak about God in a pantheistic instead of a theistic manner. Knappert believed that this was the reason why many modernist congregations did not flourish. Moreover, he argued that history showed that it was impossible to reach the masses without some kind of doctrinal formulae. Therefore, he concluded, the modernist movement was in desperate need of a confession of faith written in traditional, theistic-Christian terminology.<sup>156</sup> Together with two sympathisers, Mennonite minister A. Binnerts and Remonstrant minister P. Eldering (1868-1954), Knappert himself felt called upon to draw up such a statement. The quintessence of this confession was threefold. Committing sin, Knappert, Binnerts and Eldering stated, is hard to resist, which depraves people's spiritual life and alienates them from God. Due to His infinite mercy, however, God fills people with a feeling of remorse and the desire for salvation, the desire to be delivered from the power of sin. His love is the antidote against sin, revealed in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.<sup>157</sup> It was not only the orthodox terms used in this draft confession of faith that caused disturbance among old-school modernists; the endeavour of making such a draft as such met

<sup>153</sup> "Wij willen Protestantsch wezen liever dan Gereformeerd of Luthersch of Doopsgezind of Remonstrantsch. [...] het Protestantisme en de officiële kerkleer zijn overeenigbaar. [...] het is onchristelijk de waarde van den broeder te meten met den maatstaf van de leer." Quoted from: [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], 'Reorganisatie van de kerk', *Ibid.* 1873-29 (17 July 1873), 2-3, there 2.

<sup>154</sup> H. Oort, *Eene geloofsbelijdenis* (Amsterdam 1897).

<sup>155</sup> J. Lindeboom, 'Laurentius Knappert', *Handelingen en levensberichten van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1942-1943* (Leiden 1944), 61-90, there 82.

<sup>156</sup> L. Knappert, 'Nabetrachting', *De Hervorming* 1903-17 (25 April 1903), 129-130; L. Knappert, 'Roeping', *Ibid.* 1903-23 (6 June 1903), 177-178; 1903-24 (13 June 1903), 186-187; 1905-25 (20 June 1905), 193-195; L. Knappert, 'Ons streven, zijn licht en schaduw', *Ibid.* 1903-37 (12 September 1903), 290-191; 1903-38 (19 September 1903), 297-298; 1903-39 (26 September 1903), 305-307; 1903-40 (3 October 1903), 314-315.

<sup>157</sup> Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdiensstige richting in Nederland*, 329-330.

with fierce criticism, reaching its climax at the meeting of modern theologians in 1904.<sup>158</sup> Acknowledging that his, Binnerts's and Eldering's malcontentesque confession of faith in particular might disrupt the modernist movement and that a confession of faith in general would inevitably hinder the free development of religious life, Knappert retraced his steps.<sup>159</sup> Yet, some of his malcontent sympathisers did not follow him in this, among whom were Binnerts, Eldering and Bleeker. Recognising that the term 'confession of faith' was too controversial in modernist circles, they published a tiny '*declaration of faith*' in *De Hervorming* shortly after the 1904 meeting of modern theologians. Seeing their rejection of supernaturalism as that which connected them to other modernists, these malcontents stated to believe in an all-powerful God, Whose holy and forgiving love is exclusively and decisively revealed in the Gospel and induces people to combat sin.<sup>160</sup> Their declaration did not find a favourable reception: those who were against any doctrinal formulae simply ignored it, while those who did feel that the modernist movement was in need of more doctrinal clarity thought it was too vague.<sup>161</sup>

Nonetheless, the craving for some kind of definition of the essence of modernist faith did not die down. In 1903, this craving not only manifested itself in malcontent circles, but also among those who would soon lay the foundations of the *vrijzinnig-hervormde* movement. One of them, Dutch Reformed minister H. de Groot (1872-1967) stressed in a brochure that Reformed liberals should organise themselves separately from other modernists and that this organisation should be based on a confession of faith, as it would be impossible to effectively challenge orthodox claims without one.<sup>162</sup> Although he felt that it was already hard enough to unite Reformed liberals as such, let alone on a doctrinal basis, and that non-Reformed modernists should be involved in the pursuit of more doctrinal clarity, Niemeijer longed just as much for a confession of faith as De Groot. However, he did not welcome Knappert's attempt to formulate one, fearing that it would be written in orthodox terminology and that it would hence direct the modernist movement in a reactionary direction.<sup>163</sup> B.D. Eerdmans took up the gauntlet in 1921, defining faith from a *vrijzinnig-hervormd* point of view without using words such as 'sin' and 'salvation'. He focused on the unique character of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as the revealed will of God. A year later, C.J. Niemeijer drew up a much longer declaration of religious principles, putting emphasis on the exemplary character of Jesus and the uplifting power of the Holy Spirit. Both Eerdmans and Niemeijer failed to get their drafts accepted. In 1923, the general assembly of the VVH only reached agreement upon a statement of ecclesial principles, describing how *vrijzinnig-hervormden* wanted to organise the Dutch Reformed Church, not what they believed.<sup>164</sup>

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 330-331; Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 162-163. T. Cannegieter, one of the fiercest opponents of Knappert's endeavour, repeated his criticism in: Cannegieter, *De moderne richting*, 10.

<sup>159</sup> L. Knappert, 'Een woord van schuldbelijdenis en van verweer', *De Hervorming* 1904-18 (30 April 1904), 140; [L. Knappert in:] 'Vergadering van moderne theologen, gehouden op 12 en 13 April 1904', appendix to *Ibid.* 1904-19 (7 May 1904), 11-12.

<sup>160</sup> A. Binnerts Sz. et al., 'Ingezonden stukken – Verklaring', *Ibid.* 1904-25 (18 June 1904), 198-199.

<sup>161</sup> E.g.: Pastor Quidam, 'De "verklaring"', *Ibid.* 1904-27 (2 July 1904), 214; L.N. de Jong, 'Eenheid in het noodige', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente XXVII* (1904), 165-176; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Een woord van repliek', *Ibid.* XXVII (1904), 177-180; Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 164.

<sup>162</sup> H. de Groot, *De grondslag voor aaneensluiting van vrijzinnig-hervormden* (Leeuwarden 1903). L. Knappert wrote an introduction to this brochure.

<sup>163</sup> C.J. Niemeijer, 'Kroniek', *Teekenen des Tijds V* (1903), 373-400, there 378-382.

<sup>164</sup> Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 90-98. In 1937, J. Lindeboom gave the VVH a new statement of principles. Lindeboom did not include any doctrinal specifications in it, but he did preface it with the acknowledgement that the Dutch Reformed Church could not do without a confession of faith professing 'the Gospel of

Eerdmans's and Niemeijer's unsuccessful attempts to get a confession of faith accepted in *vrijzinnig-hervormde* circles in the first half of the 1920s did not prevent others from urging the modernist movement as a whole to come to a religious self-definition in the second half of this decade. In 1926, for example, J.L. Snethlage (1886-1983), a Dutch Reformed minister with a theologically rather isolated position among left-wing modernists,<sup>165</sup> argued that the hollow principles of freedom of conscience and tolerance in religious matters would in due course not be enough to keep the modernist movement together or to give a solid basis to modernist activities. It was therefore "absolutely necessary [...] to couch our ideals in a form which appeals to us all and by which we can test our personal convictions."<sup>166</sup> Two years later, the general NPB assembly adopted a resolution in which the demand for a clear definition of liberal Protestantism was expressed.<sup>167</sup> Poet R.M.F. Houwink (1899-1987), who would develop in an orthodox Protestant direction in the 1930s, called this resolution a "milestone in the history of liberal Protestantism." He welcomed it as a sign that the current generation of modernists permanently wanted to leave behind "liberal Protestantism in its primitive radical state" – that is, liberal Protestantism as a mere negation of orthodoxy – and that they acknowledged to be in need of a clear formulation of their faith if they ever wanted to bring their religious lives to full development and into blossom.<sup>168</sup> Voices such as these induced the *Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig-Protestantisme* (Central Commission for Liberal Protestantism or CC), a body that had taken over the role of organisational pivot in the modernist movement from the NPB in the mid-1920s and that is dealt with extensively in chapter 4, to start working on such a formulation as of late 1929.<sup>169</sup> After more than a year of disputes, two draft 'statements of liberal Protestant principles' – the term 'confession of faith' was avoided, as the CC deemed it impossible to formulate concrete conceptions of God that would satisfy every modernist – were ready: one written by Reformed minister G. Horreüs de Haas (1879-1943) and one that flowed from H.T. de Graaf's pen. In June 1931, the CC ultimately reached agreement upon the issuing of a heavily amended version of the latter.<sup>170</sup>

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Jesus Christ'. This last expression, he admitted, was a compromise between left-wing and right-wing modernists and therefore not specified: all *vrijzinnig-hervormden* could interpret it in their own way. J. Lindeboom, *Ons beginsel. De beginselverklaring der Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Nederland* (Assen [1937]), 10.

<sup>165</sup> Snethlage's theological ideas were based on an idiosyncratic interpretation of Kantian philosophy. In the 1930s, he maintained that the only scientifically solid form of government is a communist one. See: J.L. Snethlage, *Kritische filosofie, theologie en psychologie* (Arnhem 1927); J.L. Snethlage, *Democratie en dictatuur* (Arnhem 1933), 124-126.

<sup>166</sup> "...strikt noodzakelijk [...] [om] onze idealen te leeren gieten in een vorm, die tot ons allen spreekt en waaraan wij telkens onze persoonlijke overtuigingen kunnen toetsen." Quoted from: J.L. Snethlage, 'Een nieuwe vrijzinnige oriëntering', *De Hervorming* 1926-10 (6 March 1926), 75-76, there 75.

<sup>167</sup> D. Hans, 'Godsdienstig leven – Positief en eendrachtig', *De Stroom* VI.45 (15 October 1927), 2.

<sup>168</sup> "...een mijlpaal in de geschiedenis van het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme..."; "...het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme in zijn primitieven radicalen staat..." Quoted from: R.M.F. Houwink, 'Positieve vrijzinnigheid', *De Hervorming* 1929-04 (6 April 1929), 26-29, there 26-27.

<sup>169</sup> See also: V.d.W., 'In God rust mijne ziele...', *Ibid.* 1928-05 (5 May 1928), 36; D. Drijver, 'Binnenland – Een vrijzinnige geloofsbelijdenis', *Ibid.* 1930-03 (5 March 1930), 19-20. Individual theologians had already formulated declarations of liberal Protestant faith, such as M.C. van Mourik Broekman in *Vrijzinnig Christelijk geloofsleven* (Leiden [1925]), C.E. Hooykaas in *Tien hoofdpunten van ons geloof* (Huis ter Heide [1929]) and G. Horreüs de Haas in *Credo. Vrijzinnig protestantsche geloofsverklaring* (Huis ter Heide [1930]). Of course, not every liberal Protestant supported the endeavour. Liberal Reformed minister H.J.D.R. Theesing (1889-1981), for example, even went as far as to call the champions of a declaration of faith "extremely orthodox" ("*super-orthodox*"). Quoted from: H.J.D.R. Theesing, 'Godsdienstig leven – Vrijzinnig geloofsbelijdenis?', *De Stroom* VII.6 (14 January 1928), 2.

<sup>170</sup> G.J. Hoenderdaal, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen', in: Klein Wassink and Van Leeuwen (eds.), *Tussen geest en tijdgeest*, 161-297, there 213.

The statement of principles begins with the assertion that those who identify themselves as ‘liberal Protestants’ belong together because they share a “religious principle,” being the totality of paraphrases following here. Liberal Protestants recognise the ephemeral character of every doctrinal description of faith. That they ‘believe’ is to say that they find the meaning and destiny of their lives in the higher reality transcending themselves, to which they refer with the name of God. Giving oneself over to this reality in full confidence is redeeming and the Gospel of Jesus Christ plays a mediating role in that. Man’s destiny is known only by God. Man’s life on earth prepares him for his destiny, of which death is a part. Man receives his faith within the communion of saints, being an invisible church that transcends denominational lines. Placing one’s self-love above God’s will is sinful. The development of one’s inner life is a personal affair – faith is not something one person can ‘give’ to others, though he can help these others in developing their inner lives. Every expression of faith deserves respect, yet one should not hide his own convictions. Finally, liberal Protestants believe in the development of the Kingdom of God, though they do not pretend to know – and this is a break with early modernists’ expectation – that this development is going in a straight, progressive line.<sup>171</sup>

The exact formulations used in the statement of principles are considerably more cryptic than the above paraphrasing. For instance, how to make sense of a sentence, dealing with the ephemeral character of confessions of faith, that reads: “we uphold the freedom of individuals and groups to testify in words and deeds to that which God gives them, so that that which is accepted may approach that which is valid”? Therefore, numerous explanatory brochures were issued after the publication of the statement in 1931.<sup>172</sup> It is not surprising that the statement was criticised for being “too learned,” to quote M.J. Jonk (1870-1943), a prominent member of the NPB and VVH branches in Middelburg. Jonk could not get away from the impression that the statement was “solely meant for theologians and other highly developed individuals, who dispute the accuracy of its words among each other” and that “the big bulk of those who are not as intellectually developed [...] will not understand it.”<sup>173</sup> Liberal Protestant journalists D. Hans

<sup>171</sup> On 29 May 1931, M.C. van Mourik Broekman made the statement public in a radio transmission of the Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation. Referred to in: J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – Een vrijzinnig-christelijke beginselverklaring’, *Het Vaderland* (5 June 1931), evening paper C, 2. Shortly thereafter, it was integrally published in several newspapers. E.g.: ‘Beginselverklaring van het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme’, *Ibid.* (4 June 1931), evening paper C, 3.

<sup>172</sup> J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – Een beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme’, *Ibid.* (6 June 1931), evening paper C, 1-2; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Beginsel-verklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme’, *De Smidse* VI.7/8 (July-August 1931), 193-205; D. Bakker et al., *Wij gelooven... De vrijzinnig-protestantsche beginselverklaring opgesteld door de Centrale Commissie van het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme nader beschouwd* (Assen [1932]); J.A. de Koning, *De beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme. Een toelichting* (Utrecht 1935<sup>1</sup>, 1936<sup>2</sup>, 1937<sup>3</sup>, 1938<sup>4</sup>); A. Trouw, *Toelichting op de beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* (Assen [1939]); J.A. de Koning, *Over de beginselverklaring I. De eenheid van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* (s.l. [1948]); A. de Wilde and P. Smits, *Over de beginselverklaring van de Centrale Commissie v.h. Vrijzinnig Protestantisme II. Geloof en belijdenis / III. De christelijke grondslag in de beginselverklaring* (s.l. [1949]); C.B. Burger, G.J. Sirks and J. de Graaf, *Over de beginselverklaring van de Centrale Commissie v.h. Vrijzinnig Protestantisme IV. De bestemming van de mens / V. De kerk / VI. Het Koninkrijk Gods* (s.l. [1949]) [Hoenderdaal erroneously states that the series *Over de beginselverklaring* contains five instead of six volumes; see: ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen’, 294, note 72]; J.G. Jacobs, *De beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* (Utrecht [1960]). The paraphrases in the paragraph above are based on these publications.

<sup>173</sup> “...te geleerd.”; “...alléén bestemd voor theologen en andere hoog ontwikkelde personen, die onderling de juistheid harer bewoordingen bestrijden...”; “...de groote massa dergenen die niet zoo intellectueel ontwikkeld zijn.” Quoted from: M.J. Jonk, ‘Ingezonden – Onze geloofsverklaring’, *De Hervorming* 1931-10 (10 October 1931),

(1882-1946) and J.J. Meyer did not, in contrast to Jonk, withhold their appreciation of the formulations in which the statement was written, but realised that those formulations did not excel in clarity indeed.<sup>174</sup> Even M.C. van Mourik Broekman, the then chairman of the CC, had to admit that the statement of principles was “no popular document, which one grasps after reading through it once.” On the contrary, it was “a profession of faith, the meaning of which one will more and more learn to understand upon continued reflection.”<sup>175</sup>

Although the statement of liberal Protestant principles adopted by the CC was intended to be acceptable to every modernist, the theologians united in the *werkverband-Roessingh*, established as a right-wing modernist study group in 1926, a year after Roessingh’s premature death, nevertheless felt the need to write a confession of faith of their own.<sup>176</sup> It was finished in 1933 and supplied with extensive explanatory notes four years later.<sup>177</sup> As C.J. Bleeker (1898-1983), malcontent veteran J.J. Bleeker’s son, would explain in 1939, the statement of principles of the CC approached faith rationally, philosophising about the state of mind of the individual liberal Protestant believer, while the confession of faith of the *werkverband* tried to give words to faith as such, taking man’s experience of the divine as its point of departure. Moreover, as the CC wanted to satisfy the full modernist spectrum, it had “shied away from [drawing up] a declaration of faith in an ecclesial sense.”<sup>178</sup> In right-wing modernist circles, such a creed, describing and defining the central concepts and notions of faith, was longed for. The confession of faith of the *werkverband* puts forward the belief in God as the Creator and the Almighty, who reveals Himself “through the inner light” – which C.J. Bleeker rather vaguely described as man’s innate awareness of God’s existence<sup>179</sup> – and in nature, in the human personality, and in history, but above all “in Jesus Christ.” Jesus and Christ, it continued, cannot be separated; in the image of Jesus Christ, God’s love gets shape and the Kingdom of God, to the preparation of which all humans are called, is prefigured. Finally, the confession of faith of the *werkverband* stated that every man should recognise his sinfulness as a guilt before God in order to be blessed

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77-78. Later, Jonk stated to have noticed that many shared his criticism. See: M.J. Jonk, ‘Onze geloofsverklaring’, *Ibid.* 1931-12 (12 December 1931), 91-92, there 92.

<sup>174</sup> While Hans regretted this, Meyer did not. He was pleased that the statement was vague, so that everyone could relate his own faith to it in individually chosen words. See: J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – De beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in de pers’, *Het Vaderland* (27 June 1931), evening paper C, 3.

<sup>175</sup> “*Het is geen populair document, dat men omvat als men het ééns heeft doorgezien, maar een stuk geloofsgetuigenis waarvan men bij voortgaande overweging steeds meer den zin zal gaan verstaan.*” Quoted from: Van Mourik Broekman, ‘Beginsel-verklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme’, 196.

<sup>176</sup> In 1930, the year of his death, H.T. de Graaf was also honoured with a ‘*werkverband*’ named after him. Although he had had malcontent sympathies at the beginning of the twentieth century, De Graaf, in contrast to Heering and Roessingh, did not develop in a right-wing modernist direction. In fact, he is usually positioned at the *left*-wing of the modernist movement in the 1920s. See: J.G. Jacobs, *Kroniek van het vrijzinnig protestantisme. Van de Reformatie tot heden* (Arnhem 1957), 69-70. An anonymous editor in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* rightly called the confession of faith of the *werkverband-Roessingh* “a remarkable sign of the considerably increased proclivity in liberal Protestant circles to formulate faith” (“...een merkwaardig blijk van de in vrijzinnig-protestantsche kringen zoozeer gegroeide neiging tot geloofsformulering...”). Quoted from: ‘Kerknieuws – Geloofsbelijdenis in vrijzinnigen geest’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* CX.36089 (21 July 1937), evening paper, 5.

<sup>177</sup> L.J. van Holk et al., *Geloofsbelijdenis van het werkverband-Roessingh* (Assen [1937]). Klooster is thus wrong to state that the confession of faith itself was published in 1937. See: Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 63.

<sup>178</sup> “...is teruggedeeind voor een geloofsverklaring in kerkelijken zin.” Quoted from: ‘De geloofsbelijdenis in het werkverband Roessingh’, *Leeuwarder Courant* CLXXXVIII.23 (27 January 1939), 5.

<sup>179</sup> C.J. Bleeker, ‘Openbaring’, in: Van Holk, *Geloofsbelijdenis van het werkverband-Roessingh*, 27-51, there 40.



with God's Holy Spirit and hence receive eternal life.<sup>180</sup> The formulations it contained turned out to be less straightforward than its authors expected; after it was published, a huge disagreement about the interpretations of those formulations manifested itself within the *werkverband*. The notes intended to explain those formulations complicated things even further.<sup>181</sup>

It will not have been a coincidence that the *Linker-werkgroep van moderne theologen* (Study Group of Left-Wing Modern Theologians), founded by G. Horreüs de Haas in 1934 to unite those who did not welcome the dominance of right-wing modernism in liberal Protestant theology,<sup>182</sup> published a statement of principles a year after the *werkverband-Roessingh* had produced its confession of faith. This statement did not specify *what* the members of the *Linker-werkgroep* believed in, but it did describe *how* they looked at themselves as religious beings. As such, it is justified to discuss it as part of the strong urge in the interwar modernist movement to define what liberal Protestant faith was all about. The author of the statement, Horreüs de Haas himself, particularly accentuated that the historical Jesus the Nazarene should not be identified too closely with the "inner Christ of faith," thereby criticising right-wing modernists' reference to 'Jesus Christ'. Recognising a "regular and organic connection between everything in this world [...] [referred to with] the name of 'God'" and seeing all manifestations of belief in higher things as concrete expressions of "the one universal religion that we all more or less profess," he defined liberal Protestantism as a "humanistic and cultural" faith aspiring after "the purification of individuals' lives and a higher community of nations and people based on justice and solidarity."<sup>183</sup> This statement of principles was intended to be the starting point for further left-wing modernist reflection upon the statement of liberal Protestant principles that the CC had formulated.<sup>184</sup>

Ironically, there was thus a feeling in both right- and left-wing modernist circles that the document intended to give more clarity about the identity of liberal Protestantism needed to be specified in another document that, in turn, needed further explanation as well.

Finally, the Remonstrant Brotherhood received a confession of faith in 1940, for the second time in its history. In 1621, two years after the Synod of Dordt had expelled the Arminian or Remonstrant faction from the Dutch Reformed Church, its leader Simon Episcopius (1583-1643) had written an apologetic confession of faith, defending man's free will against the Gomarian theories of limited atonement (the belief that Christ had died only for the elect instead of for mankind as a whole) and perseverance of the saints (the idea that the elect cannot lose their faith) canonised in Dordt. Episcopius's document had been merely a doctrinal frame

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<sup>180</sup> "...door het innerlijke licht..."; "...in Jezus Christus." See: *Geloofsbelijdenis van het werkverband-Roessingh*, 2-6. The quotes are on p. 3. See also: Jacobs, *Kroniek van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, 62-63, 125-126. See also: Hoenderdaal, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen', 211-212.

<sup>181</sup> *Geloofsbelijdenis van het werkverband-Roessingh*, VI.

<sup>182</sup> Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 70.

<sup>183</sup> "...innerlijken Christus des geloofs."; "...wetmatige en organische werelddamenhang [...] die wij in den naam van God erkennen..."; "...eene universele religie, die allen in meerdere of mindere mate belijden."; "...humanistische en culturele..."; "...de levensheiliging der enkelingen en op een hoogere volken- en menschengemeenschap van gerechtigheid en solidariteit." The statement of principles is included in: G. Horreüs de Haas, *Overlevering en waarheid* (Assen 1934), 9-11.

<sup>184</sup> 'Kerknieuws – Linker werkgroep der moderne theologen', *Het Vaderland* (8 November 1934), evening paper D, 2. In the introduction to their statement of principles, Horreüs de Haas and the other members of the *Linker-werkgroep* stated that they concurred with the general purport of the statement of the CC, but deemed it desirable nonetheless to "express themselves in their own way" ("...uitspreken op eigen wijze."). Quoted from: Horreüs de Haas, *Overlevering en waarheid*, 9.

of reference, yet not obligatory for ministers to endorse. In 1861, when new articles of association of the Remonstrant Brotherhood had been formulated, this document had definitively lost its theological significance. In the following decades, when the Brotherhood had become entirely modernist, Episcopius had even been blamed for imitating the orthodox practice of writing a confession of faith.<sup>185</sup> Yet, due to the ‘ecclesial turn’ and the growing influence of right-wing modernists – the two most important of whom, Roessingh and Heering, were both Remonstrants –, the dissatisfaction with the lack of a confession of faith had fully manifested itself in Remonstrant circles in the 1930s.<sup>186</sup> The German occupation of the Netherlands, permeating Dutch society with a national-socialist outlook on life, now gave the final push for the general assembly of the Remonstrant Brotherhood to decide upon a confession of faith.<sup>187</sup> Again, no Remonstrant was forced to subscribe to it; as G.J. Heering, its *auctor intellectualis*, explained, this new confession did not pretend to have everlasting value, contrary to the Three Forms of Unity, but was solely meant to give expression to what he called “the Remonstrant mentality” in words congruent with the Christian tradition and the Brotherhood’s past. It had a Trinitarian character, praising God as “our Heavenly Father” who governs all according to His just and merciful will, Jesus Christ as “image of God’s holy Being and Revelation of His mercy,” and God’s Holy Spirit for “opening up our hearts to the Truth.” Moreover, it was a profession of the belief in the communion of saints gathered in the church of Christ, which is called to preach the Gospel, and in the Kingdom of God, “breaking through where Christ rules in the hearts.” This confession of faith met with very little criticism.<sup>188</sup> Even if the specific circumstances are taken into account – the state of war might have made potential critics less inclined to start a debate –, the rather smooth adoption of this confession of faith evinces that traditional Christian terminology and a strong albeit not specified Christological interpretation of faith, once highly controversial among modernists, were now widely accepted in Remonstrant circles.

## 6. Identifying Modernism: An Evaluation

In the first decades after its birth, the need to clearly delineate the modernist movement was absent. Modernists felt that it was rather self-evident what defined them as religious beings: they were everything orthodox Protestants were not. They rejected a supernaturalist interpretation of the Bible and all ecclesial practices rooted therein, and vehemently opposed every violation of the freedom of conscience. Consequently, there was a strong reluctance among modernists to define their movement: after all, pinning people down to formulae was an orthodox practice, while it was simply impossible to put the ‘free piety’ they upheld into words with which all of them could identify. More than that, trying to compress modernism into formulae was seen as an infringement on modernism itself. The same reluctance prevented

<sup>185</sup> Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 65-66, 225, 374, 391, 401.

<sup>186</sup> G.J. Sirks (1887-1969) made a plea for a Remonstrant confession of faith in 1927. Haentjens did the same in 1931. See: *Ibid.*, 392; Th.M. van Leeuwen, ‘De belijdenis van 1940’, in: E.J. Kuiper and Th.M. van Leeuwen, *Als een vuurbaken. Teksten over de functie van belijdenissen naar remonstrants inzicht* (Zoetermeer 1994), 77-79.

<sup>187</sup> J.F. Goud, ‘Wij geloven’, in: J.F. Goud and K.J. Holtzapffel (eds.), *Wij geloven – wat geloven wij? Remonstrants belijden in 1940 en nu* (Zoetermeer 2004), 18-46, there 24.

<sup>188</sup> “...het Remonstrantsche gevoelen...”; “...onze Hemelsche Vader...”; “...Beeltenis van Gods heilig Wezen en Openbaring zijner genade...”; “...die onze harten ontsluit voor de Waarheid...”; “...breekt door waar Christus heerscht in de harten...” Quoted from: Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 393-401. The quotes are on pp. 396-397.

modernists from getting tightly organised: the boundaries of a movement were more fluid than those of a party, which required all its members to commit themselves loyally to one and the same programme of action. Yet, modernists felt, everyone who aspired after the modernisation of Christianity and the permeation of society with this modernised Christianity, regardless of the way in which he wanted to realise this aspiration, should be welcome in their ranks. It was this aspiration from which modernists took their identity. In line with that, they prided themselves on being the true heirs to the Reformation; they wanted to complete the reforms of church life and social life that the earliest Protestants had, in their view, only half-heartedly begun. When the short-lived 'ethical modernist' sub-current evaporated after 1880, the archetype of a modernist, whose world view and weariness of ongoing ecclesial struggles (particularly in the Dutch Reformed Church) later came to be called 'old-school modernism', was formed. F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. and J. van Loenen Martinet were two of the most pre-eminent examples of this archetype, and edited *De Hervorming* accordingly.

The dichotomy between modernism and orthodoxy was more problematic than modernists generally recognised: orthodox Protestants also felt that they were, for example, the champions of the freedom of conscience. Moreover, as early as the 1880s, dissatisfaction with modernism as a mere negation of orthodoxy became manifest. Both of these factors did not immediately challenge the way modernists looked at themselves: they continued to cling to the self-image of being the true heirs to the Reformation. Dissatisfied modernists were reassuringly told in the modernist press that it was necessary to shatter the old – supernaturalist beliefs and traditions – before something new could be built. In the 1880s and early 1890s, the expectation that the future would be theirs was still predominant among modernists. The feeling that modernists would eventually create new forms in which religious life could find expression still prevailed among them.

However, when those new forms continued to be lacking, orthodoxy continued to become ever more influential instead of insignificant, and a new generation that had not witnessed the heydays of modernism began to question what had been self-evident for first-generation modernists, the problematic and dissatisfactory character of modernism as everything orthodoxy was not, developed into a genuine identity crisis from the second half of the 1890s onwards. In modernist circles, it came to be recognised that while orthodox Protestants might caricature modernists, the latter had equally caricatured the former – as a consequence of which their identity did not come down to a negation of orthodoxy, but rather to a negation of a *caricature* of orthodoxy. As B.D. Eerdmans and others tried to show, even the confessionalist current within orthodoxy was not immune to convictions it claimed to denounce in modernism. In turn, the modernist movement became less decisive in its rejection of orthodoxy. A group of theologically discontented modernists, blaming old-school modernism for its conceptual vagueness and intellectualism, fell back on orthodox terminology to give expression to their inner lives. Another group actively sought rapprochement with non-confessionalist orthodoxy. Both groups, together with those modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church who wanted to counteract ecclesial indifference in their circles, came to identify themselves as '*vrijzinnig*' rather than '*modern*', due to the connotations – in their view negative ones – the latter had. This trend should not be trivialised. While '*modern*' connoted reform-mindedness, the embracement of the term '*vrijzinnig*' marked a significant shift of focus: feeling marginalised, modernists in the early twentieth

century basically gave up their pursuit of a structurally reformed church life, or even an alternative to church life and now rather attempted to stop their position in the existing church life from deteriorating any further.

Because modernists did not express their experiences of the divine in a shared vocabulary, their sense of togetherness was still based on their identification as non-orthodox, and their movement was confronted with various ecclesial and theological groups in its midst that began to accentuate their distinctive features, the need for some kind of ‘declaration of faith’ emerged and gradually intensified in the early twentieth century. Such a declaration should answer the questions of what liberal Protestantism was all about and what the underlying unity of all who identified as ‘liberal Protestants’ actually was. A major stimulus to defining liberal Protestantism was a 1923 lecture in which K.H. Roessingh blamed modernists for their lack of organisation and their lack of insight into their spiritual unity.<sup>189</sup> As chapter 4 indicates, Roessingh’s first complaint almost immediately led to the creation of the CC. His second indictment ultimately induced the CC to come to clarity regarding modernists’ shared identity, finding completion in a ‘statement of liberal Protestant principles’ in 1931. Moreover, the feeling of living in a ‘period of transition’ in a spiritual respect will have intensified the need for such a statement as well. Particularly after the First World War, there was a tendency in the modernist press, as there was in culture generally, to stress that ‘the old’ had served its turn, but that ‘the new’ had yet to announce itself.<sup>190</sup> Some must have felt that a definition of liberal Protestantism might serve as something to which modernists could hold on in these confusing times.

However, instead of making clear what ‘being a modernist’ implied and fostering more unity among modernists on a basis exceeding the mere fact that they did not feel to belong to orthodoxy, the CC’s statement of liberal Protestant principles was rather vague and did not prevent the different modernist subcurrents from giving expression to religious life in distinct concepts and words. Of course, while the statement can hardly be qualified as anything other than ‘vague’ in retrospect, it might have been the case that contemporary liberal Protestants did not perceive it as such.<sup>191</sup> Yet, the statement was characterised as having ambiguous formulations even in the year of its publication and, what is more, was actually intended to be vague. The CC deliberately did not specify what it meant when speaking of ‘Jesus Christ’, ‘the mediating role of the Gospel’ or ‘sinfulness’ in its statement, in order to give every modernist the opportunity to interpret its formulations individually.<sup>192</sup> This was in line with the open character of the modernist movement, but did not contribute to giving a clear description of

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<sup>189</sup> K.H. Roessingh, ‘Rede voor de Vergadering van Moderne Theologen’, in: K.H. Roessingh (G.J. Heering ed.), *Verzamelde werken* II (Arnhem 1926), 437-449. According to Th.M. van Leeuwen, no other lecture has had such an impact in the modernist movement as this one. See: Th.M. van Leeuwen, ‘Nieuwegracht 27: de droom van een vrijzinnige zuil’, in: De Baar and Van Dijk (eds.), *Herinnering en identiteit*, 167-178, there 170.

<sup>190</sup> E.g.: G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, ‘De Indische theosophie en hare beteekenis voor ons’, *De Hervorming* 1910-51 (17 December 1910), 401-402, there 401; G. Horreüs de Haas, *De nieuwe maatschappij* ([Leeuwarden 1917]); A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De mentaliteit der 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw’, *De Hervorming* 1920-09 (6 March 1920), 33; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Onze eigen tijd’, *Ibid.* 1921-23 (11 June 1921), 179-180, there 179; K.F. Proost, ‘Hoofdartikel – Mystiek in literatuur’, *Ibid.* 1922-18 (6 May 1922), 137-138, there 137; K.F. Proost, ‘Boekbespreking – “Communisme en moraal”’, *Ibid.* 1926-15 (10 April 1926), 117.

<sup>191</sup> The qualification ‘vague’ is attributed to the statement of the CC in: Smits, *De identiteitsimpasse van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, 35-36; Schuurisma, *Jaren van opgang*, 120.

<sup>192</sup> J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – De beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in de pers’, *Het Vaderland* (27 June 1931), evening paper C, 3.

liberal Protestantism, one of the motives to drawing up a declaration of faith in the first place. As for the other motive behind the endeavour to draw up such a declaration – giving modernists' spiritual unity a conceptual underpinning –, the CC's statement did not fulfil its purpose either. Historian G.J. Hoenderdaal might allege that the statement "has had a unifying function" and "has been cited often," but all signs rather point to the contrary.<sup>193</sup> Soon after its issuing, alternative documents describing the essence of liberal Protestantism were formulated in right-wing and left-wing modernist circles, sealing the fate of the CC's statement. As early as the late 1940s, Remonstrant minister J.A. de Koning (1899-1973) lamented that the CC's statement had "faded somewhat into the background."<sup>194</sup> In 1960, J.G. Jacobs, the then pastor of the NPB branch in The Hague, had to conclude that it "has unfortunately not played the role that could be expected of it, and has not become as known as it undoubtedly deserved to be."<sup>195</sup> Hoenderdaal does recognise that the confessions of faith of the *werkverband-Roessingh* and the Remonstrant Brotherhood had already become superseded after the Second World War: for liberal Protestants after 1945, he argued, it was particularly impossible to speak as "uninhibitedly about God's omnipotence" as in these two confessions of faith.<sup>196</sup>

Even more significant than the phrases and concepts used in the various declarations of faith written in the first decades of the twentieth century, and the vagueness and rapid deficiency of these phrases and concepts is, in terms of modernists' self-image, the mere fact that such declarations were written at all: it reveals that early twentieth-century modernists were struggling with their identity, due to their perception that first-generation modernists' expectations had not come true and that the self-image rooted in these expectations was no longer tenable. This, as the next chapters show, affected the development of their movement in the context of organised religious life.

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<sup>193</sup> "...heeft [...] bindend gewerkt in het vrijzinnig protestantisme en is vaak geciteerd." Quoted from: Hoenderdaal, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen', 214.

<sup>194</sup> "...is helaas wat op de achtergrond geraakt." Quoted from: De Koning, *Over de beginselverklaring* I, 4. See also: Smits, *De identiteitsimpasse van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, 34.

<sup>195</sup> "...heeft helaas niet die rol gespeeld, welke men ervan kon verwachten en het heeft niet die bekendheid gekregen, waarop het ongetwijfeld recht had." Quoted from: Jacobs, *De beginselverklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, 1.

<sup>196</sup> Hoenderdaal, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen', 212-213.

## 4. ENVISIONING THE FAITH COMMUNITY OF TOMORROW

### 1. “The Ape of God’s Kingdom”

In the speech with which he inaugurated the 1909 annual NPB meeting, Remonstrant minister W.H. Stenfert Kroese (1850-1920), the then chairman of the NPB, looked back upon the formative years of the modernist movement. High expectations, he recalled, had accompanied the founding and early development of the *Protestantenbond*. There had been a strong sentiment that the NPB would not only be a place of refuge for modernists escaping church congregations with orthodox majorities, but that it would ultimately even come to replace the institution of the church altogether. The leadership of the NPB had cherished the ideal that modernists would one day no longer be divided among several church denominations, but that they would be united in the NPB. Moreover, there had been a predominant feeling in NPB circles that existing ecclesial practices and regulations hindered the free development of religious life. It had therefore been hoped, Stenfert Kroese lectured, that the NPB would give shape to a new kind of religious community:

Indeed, that was the illusion. Had the church not had its day? Had the modern world view and modern outlook on life not brought into being an altered outlook on church life? Had the church not stopped being the supernatural institution of salvation, and had the time not come to replace it by a community in which kindred spirits would seek to nourish and strengthen each other’s spiritual lives? And was the *Protestantenbond*, the organisational centre of the modernist movement, not the obvious body to replace the church? – Yes, it was perfectly understandable that these questions were asked and that the illusion mentioned above stirred modernists’ minds and hearts. In many respects, the church only had itself to blame for that.<sup>1</sup>

In the 1860s and 1870s, Stenfert Kroese explained, some modernists had doubted whether it was possible to purge the church of the spirit of clericalism with which it had been permeated from its emergence onwards. Claiming that the whole concept of the church did not make any sense without doctrinal unity and a supernatural interpretation of Christianity, they had urged their fellow modernists to seek new forms in which a modernised Christianity could find expression. Stenfert Kroese illustrated his atmospheric description of the early modernist movement by quoting what some of its then protagonists had said about the institution of the church. Alluding to the proverb ‘the ape of God’, with which such theologians as Augustine (354-430) and Luther had depicted Satan as an unsuccessful, evil imitator of God, Dutch Reformed minister J.P. de Keyser (1818-1878) had labelled the church as “the ape of God’s Kingdom.” By this he meant that the church might seem to be doing what God had in mind, but that this was merely a delusion. In line with this, I. Hooykaas had advanced the proposition that Christianity would have made much more progress if there had never been a church. Ph.R. Hugenholtz had even implied that the Kingdom of God would never be fulfilled as long as the church continued

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<sup>1</sup> “Inderdaad zóó was de illusie. Had de Kerk niet uitgediend? Had de moderne wereld- en levensbeschouwing niet een gewijzigd kerkbegrip doen ontstaan? Had de Kerk niet opgehouden de bovennatuurlijke heilsinrichting ter zaligheid te zijn, en was de tijd niet gekomen om haar te doen vervangen door een gemeenschap, waarin verwante zielen den vromen zin bij elkander zoeken te onderhouden en te versterken? En was hiertoe de *Protestantenbond*, die het vereenigingspunt was van alle godsdienstig-vrijzinnigen, niet het aangewezen lichaam? – O, het was alleszins begrijpelijk, dat deze en dergelijke vragen gesteld werden, en dat de zoo even genoemde illusie in de hoofden en harten omging. De Kerk had het er in vele opzichten naar gemaakt.” Quoted from: [W.H. Stenfert Kroese in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering’, *De Hervorming* 1909-44 (30 October 1909), 348-350, there 349.

to exist.<sup>2</sup> Another modernist whom Stenfert Kroese could have mentioned was Rauwenhoff. In 1867, the latter had published an article in which he stated that society was beginning to replace the church as the focal point of religious life. Accordingly, Rauwenhoff had argued that it was best for church denominations to disintegrate into autonomous congregations, which would bring church life and social life into a new synthesis. Lindeboom regards this article as best exemplifying the prevailing attitude towards the church among first-generation modernists. Although modernists had not unanimously agreed with Rauwenhoff, opinions such as his had predominated in discussions on ecclesial affairs in the early modernist movement; after Rauwenhoff's 1867 article, voices such as his, to quote Lindeboom, had "swelled into a powerful choir."<sup>3</sup>

Yet in 1909, the tide had already turned. Stenfert Kroese even had to warn in his speech of "denominationalism," being the tendency he noticed among modernists to feel more involved with the different church denominations to which they belonged than with the modernist movement as a whole, and for the growing tendency to identify religious life with church life.<sup>4</sup> Earlier that year, B.D. Eerdmans, writing under the pen name '*Ignotus*', had expressed that "at present, church denominations exert a manifest attraction on modernists." Contrary to Rauwenhoff's expectation, "contemporary liberal Protestants clearly show that they attach more value to the concept of the church than to the concept of the free congregation."<sup>5</sup> This had even been noticeable six years before – in 1903, a discussion had been held during the annual meeting of modern theologians on "modernists' resurgent attachment to church denominations."<sup>6</sup> I. van den Bergh, who delivered an address on the subject, had questioned whether this trend ought to be appreciated or regretted. It should be considered positively, he had argued, if it stemmed from a growing aversion to excessive individualism and a growing awareness that religion can only exert influence on society through institutions. As chapter 9 analyses, this awareness, which was indeed increasing in modernist circles at the time, in turn flew from the perception that while the modernist movement was in danger of becoming marginalised, other, highly institutionalised or 'pillarised' groups became ever more socially influential and politically powerful. On the other hand, the growing revaluation of the institution of the church should be considered negatively in Van den Bergh's opinion if it led to denominational particularism and to a halt in the pursuit of church reform. Van den Bergh had been particularly critical of modernists who sacrificed dedication towards modernist principles in favour of staying in the Dutch Reformed Church. The latter lacked a modernist majority, forcing modernists to make concessions to their adversaries, and hence lacked the potential to be the institution through which modernists could exert more influence on society. This last remark had evoked objections, especially from C.J. Niemeijer. Another discussant, C.W. Colenbrander, had concluded from Van den Bergh's words that,

<sup>2</sup> "...de aap van het Godsrijk." For this quote and the subsequent paraphrases, see: *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> "...die zwol tot een machtig koor." See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 109-10; II, 44. The quote is on this last page.

<sup>4</sup> "...kerkisme..." Quoted from: [W.H. Stenfert Kroese in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering', *De Hervorming* 1909-44 (30 October 1909), 348-350, there 349.

<sup>5</sup> "Juist in deze dagen blijkt het dat de aantrekkingskracht van een kerkgenootschap haar invloed in [moderne] kringen op duidelijke wijze doet gevoelen. [...] De hedendaagsche vrijzinnigen [...] toonen duidelijk het begrip kerk te stellen boven het begrip vrije gemeente." Quoted from: Ignotus [B.D. Eerdmans], 'Reactie of vooruitgang?', *Theologisch Tijdschrift* XLIII (1909), 1-16, 146-180, there 7-8. See also: Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 176.

<sup>6</sup> "...de oplevende gehechtheid aan kerkgenootschap onder moderneren..." Quoted from: [I. van den Bergh in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Vergadering van moderne theologen', *De Hervorming* 1903-32 (8 August 1903), 251.

whether it should be appreciated or not, the revaluation of the institution of the church had one inevitable consequence: it prevented the NPB from ever replacing the existing churches. Not a single attendant of the 1903 meeting of modern theologians had really seemed to deplore that.<sup>7</sup>

In the decades following the 1900s, voices rejecting the institution of the church nearly disappeared in modernist public opinion. In 1926, for example, the CC, which had taken over the role of organisational centre of the modernist movement from the NPB, issued a pamphlet in which it claimed that “Christianity cannot be conceived of as a community building and community reform force in our society without a church.”<sup>8</sup> This claim, diametrically opposed to what Rauwenhoff had put forward in 1867, did not lead to any protest. Lindeboom identifies the “intensified appreciation of the institution of the church,” of which this striking contrast was the result, as one of the defining characteristics of the modernist movement from the late 1890s onwards.<sup>9</sup> Even in the NPB, in the early history of which Lindeboom notices a strong anti-church orientation, this process made itself felt: many if not most NPB branches developed into church-like congregations, giving its members the opportunity to baptise their children and to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. In the 1870s and 1880s, that would have been unheard of. Why did this revaluation of the church and ecclesial practices occur? This chapter argues that while the NPB wanted to be the organisation in which all Dutch modernists from different denominations would be united, and to give shape to a new kind of religious community that would lack ecclesial features, it paradoxically played a decisive role in the occurrence of this ‘ecclesial turn’. Moreover, the concept of the ‘*volkskerk*’ that became dominant in Dutch Reformed thinking fuelled denominationalism both among modernists belonging to the Dutch Reformed Church and those belonging to other churches, and tempered radical ecclesial reform-mindedness.

## 2. The NPB and the Free Congregation as Alternatives to the Existing Churches

In the late 1860s, optimism was the dominant sentiment within the modernist movement. Modernists were convinced that the future was theirs and did not doubt their chances of bringing about a second Reformation. The already-mentioned article Rauwenhoff wrote in 1867 was a perfect reflection thereof. It was, already at that moment itself, an important article, which was further accentuated by the fact that it introduced the first issue of the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*. This journal was intended to be, and effectively turned out to be, the main platform on which modern theologians could present and discuss the results of their research. In his article, Rauwenhoff gave an overview of the way in which the concept of the church had developed over time as well as a normative interpretation of this development. The church as an institution, he argued, did not reach back to Jesus or the apostles. Only from the second century of the Common Era onwards had it become custom to view the church “as a divine institution, as the sole possessor of the divine truth, which proclaims this truth as infallible, [and] as the sole possessor, authorised by God, of the only true means of salvation.”<sup>10</sup> Roman Catholics still

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Binnenlandsch nieuws – Moderne theologen’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1903-10324 (3 September 1903), 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> “Zonder kerk laat zich in onze samenleving het Christendom niet als gemeenschaps-bouwende en gemeenschaps-hervormende kracht denken.” Quoted from: ‘Jeugdbeweging – Jeugddag 1926’, *De Hervorming* 1926-02 (9 January 1926), 10-12, there 11.

<sup>9</sup> “...verhoogd kerkelijk besef.” Quoted from: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 90.

<sup>10</sup> “...een goddelijke instelling, die alleen de goddelijke waarheid bezit en deze onfeilbaar verklaart, die met goddelijk gezag over de eenige ware heilsmiddelen beschikt.” Quoted from: L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, ‘De kerk’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* I (1867), 1-37, there 9. See also: Slis, *L.W.E. Rauwenhoff*, 115-117.



looked at the church as such and believed that the church, personified in the divinely ordained priest, was an indispensable intermediary between them and God, or, to put it another way, that the church was their gateway to heaven. In the sixteenth century, the Reformers had challenged this notion by stating that the authority of the individual conscience prevails over clerical authority. They had based this claim on biblical words that could be interpreted as an endorsement of their vision. Protestants, however, had mistakenly seen the *means* with which the Reformers had upheld the authority of conscience – that is, the authority of Scripture – as a principle in itself. In consequence, the church continued to be seen in Protestantism as a divine institution, albeit not as the distributor of salvation, but as the disseminator of the Word of God and as the guardian of the confessions of faith that ‘correctly’ explain the Word of God. For that reason, Rauwenhoff concluded that Protestants had actually preserved the supernatural foundation of the institution of the church.<sup>11</sup>

Because modern theologians had decisively rejected supernaturalism, modernists ought therefore to break with the institution of the church as well. On the one hand, Rauwenhoff expected that this would not be too difficult, as society was already taking over tasks that had previously been performed by the church. In due course, he believed, the church would simply evaporate. However, this only applied to its ‘material’ side; as regards its ‘spiritual’ side, the church was still the form in which Christian communities of faith were organised. What then, Rauwenhoff asked while taking into account that the church intrinsically had a supernatural basis and that modernists could not accept this basis, should the attitude of liberal Protestants towards the church be?

Rauwenhoff did not advise modernists to leave their congregations in order to immediately create newly structured communities of faith outside existing church life. Leaving the churches voluntarily would have consequences that could hamper the development of the modernist movement: it would deprive modernists of opportunities to lay claim to church property and to influence the (still) orthodox masses.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, supernaturalist Protestants could interpret a massive exodus as a sign that modernists themselves acknowledged that they had no right to be in the church. Yet, Rauwenhoff stressed that the modernist movement had not externally entered the church, but had emerged within it and *thus* had all the right to be in it. Besides, he was convinced that, in the long run, the church as it existed in his day – that is, as a multitude of denominations comprising numerous congregations, which in turn comprised people with diverse conceptions of God – was doomed to perish anyway. Instead of anticipating this ultimate and inevitable dissolution of the church by withdrawing from it right away, modernists should try to reform the church from within, in such a way that the community of faith, of which the church was the institutional embodiment, could take its ‘natural’ shape. According to Rauwenhoff, communities of faith ‘naturally’ had and would ‘naturally’ take the form of free congregations, voluntary associations of like-minded believers, not hindered by any historically-given denominational, overarching structure.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Rauwenhoff, ‘De kerk’, 14-15. See also: J. van den Berg, ‘Oplossing der kerk in de maatschappij? Modernen, ethischen en de toekomstvisie van Richard Rothe’, in: *Ad interim. Opstellen over eschatologie, apocalypatie en ethiek, aangeboden aan prof.dr. R. Schippers, ter gelegenheid van zijn vijf en twintig-jarig ambtsjubileum aan de faculteit der godgeleerdheid van de Vrije Universiteit* (Kampen [1975]), 151-167, there 152-156.

<sup>12</sup> Rauwenhoff, ‘De kerk’, 24-25.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

Rauwenhoff's article was not unanimously applauded in modernist circles. In 1867, in the same volume of *Theologisch Tijdschrift*, F.W.B. van Bell commented on it with words of disapproval. According to him, Rauwenhoff made the mistake of taking the church in its Roman Catholic form to be normative. In result, Rauwenhoff concluded that, consequently, the institution of the church intrinsically had a supernatural fundament. Van Bell disagreed: the church had been given and continued to have such a foundation only because Christians both in past and present had supernaturalist beliefs. The church existed independently of such beliefs. It had naturally come into being as the organisational form of expression of Christians' heartfelt desire to worship God collectively. Because of that, Van Bell challenged Rauwenhoff's claim that free congregations, consisting only of like-minded individuals, were the 'natural' institutional embodiments of the Christian community of faith. Rather, such congregations conflicted with Jesus's notion of humanity, as their existence would inevitably lead to a self-chosen "isolation of the intellectually most developed and most civilised individuals, who will no longer associate with less developed and less civilised people."<sup>14</sup>

Notwithstanding criticism such as Van Bell's, the church was a controversial institution among modernists. Unsurprisingly, it was not long before actual attempts were made within the modernist movement to reform the existing configuration of ecclesial-religious life. The founding of the NPB could be seen as such an attempt. From its formation onwards, two tendencies were discernible within its ranks: one in which the NPB was seen as *additional* to church life, created to support liberal-minded church members in any possible way as well as to facilitate cross-denominational contacts, and another in which the association was thought of as an *alternative* to church life, as prefiguration of the faith community of the future.<sup>15</sup> The aim of enhancing the free development of religious life both within and outside of the sphere of the churches should be read as a compromise between these two tendencies. The branches that came into being under the colours of the NPB on the local level therefore had a rather equivocal character. On the one hand, they functioned as meeting places of religious liberals in a particular municipality, offering lectures, creating reading clubs, and functioning as social clubs. On the other hand, a lot of branches gradually adopted 'ecclesial' practices, such as organising religious services (eventually even including baptism and the Lord's Supper), setting up Sunday schools, and appointing 'pastors'. As such, they practically developed into nondenominational, 'free' congregations.<sup>16</sup> As shown below, this development would ultimately have severe consequences for the position of the NPB within the modernist movement.

From the beginning, the NPB had particular difficulty in positioning itself towards the largest Protestant denomination in the Netherlands, the Dutch Reformed Church. It did not want to interfere in inner-church affairs as an interested party, but some branches nonetheless participated in Dutch Reformed church council elections, presenting their own list of candidates or recommending candidates on other lists. In places where the Dutch Reformed community was primarily orthodox, a growing amount of modernists no longer made the

<sup>14</sup> "...isolement van de meest ontwikkelden en beschaafden, met opheffing van de gemeenschap met minder ontwikkelden en beschaafden." Quoted from: F.W.B. van Bell, 'De modernen in het protestantsche kerkgenootschap', *Ibid.* I (1867), 211-231, there 229. See also: H. Faber, *Gedachten over de kerk in het vrijzinnig christendom* (Arnhem 1946), 16-18; Van den Berg, 'Oplossing der kerk in de maatschappij?', 156.

<sup>15</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 50; Boerlage, *De Nederlandse Protestanten Bond*, 2.

<sup>16</sup> Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 44-45.

Sunday trip to their home congregation, but attended ‘church’ in the local NPB branch instead.<sup>17</sup> As a result, many branches became an alternative to the existing (Dutch Reformed) church life, in the sense that they provided modernists with another venue for religious services. Yet, regarding their organisation, both externally (their configuration) and internally (the content of the services they offered), NPB branches hardly differed from denominational congregations. They were thus *not* alternatives in the sense of offering something completely new. They resembled instead the slightly older orthodox Reformed ‘*evangelisaties*’ or ‘*evangelisatieverenigingen*’ (literally: ‘evangelisation societies’), which also convened religious services as an alternative to the services in Dutch Reformed congregations.<sup>18</sup> Because of their dualist character, NPB branches never really became experimental gardens of religious reorganisation. Next to a group of modernists who envisioned the NPB to become the faith community of tomorrow, there was a large group of NPB members who did not want to give up their church membership and primarily sought a place of ‘refuge’, to escape what they experienced as orthodox tyranny. They were less concerned with liturgical reforms than with preserving their place within institutional Christianity; for them, the NPB was a temporary or semi-permanent shelter, which they could leave as soon as their home congregations would allow them to worship God the way they wanted to. Lindeboom is right to characterise the dominant spirit among the NPB leaders in the first years after the association’s founding as “anti-ecclesial,”<sup>19</sup> but its aim to strengthen and serve the modernist element in the churches – while simultaneously stimulating the development of the modernist movement outside of the churches – hindered the NPB from radically altering existing church practices.<sup>20</sup>

In spite of all this, much discussion took place within the NPB on how the existing churches could be reformed and what the future of the church would be. The first volumes of *De Hervorming* were full of articles in which modernist opinion makers made suggestions to solve factional struggles and to anticipate possible future developments. Regarding institutional reforms, specific attention was paid to the position of modernists within the Dutch Reformed Church. As said, this position had become precarious after 1867 due to the extension of the right to vote in church council elections to all male members of the Dutch Reformed Church, which made orthodoxy more influential and hence led to an intensification of factional quarrels. Some Dutch Reformed modernists agreed with Rauwenhoff that the institution of the church was no longer fit to give shape to religious community life. They tried to find a way to appease the relationships with their orthodox fellow church members as a transitional measure, in order to subsequently make possible a harmonious apportionment of the joint church propriety and to finally create more homogeneous, autonomous congregations of kindred spirits. Others, whose numbers would grow over the years, did not see a *modus vivendi* with orthodoxy as an intermediate stage towards a disintegration of the church, but rather as an ultimate goal in itself. For yet another group, proactively breaking with the church was an actual option.

<sup>17</sup> [Van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond*, 17-18; Van der Hoeve, *Het werk van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond*, 6.

<sup>18</sup> The oldest of these orthodox ‘*evangelisatieverenigingen*’ were founded in response to the rise of modern theology. See: Houkes, *Christelijke vaderlanders*, 73-86; T.T. Ozinga, ‘Hervormde evangelisatieverenigingen in Nederland (1855-1951)’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXXII.71 (December 2009), 35-47.

<sup>19</sup> “...anti-kerkelijk...” Quoted from: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 51, 98.

<sup>20</sup> See also: T.E.M. Krijger, ‘De Protestantenvbond als kerk der toekomst. De geschiedenis van een vervlogen ideaal (1868-1923)’ [forthcoming, 2017].

Ph.R. Hugenholtz and his brother P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., two Dutch Reformed ministers in Amsterdam, belonged to this last category. Initially, both had hoped for a solution to the conflict of interests between modernists and orthodoxy *within* the Dutch Reformed Church. Ph.R. Hugenholtz in particular had actively engaged himself in finding such a solution. In the early 1870s, together with H.Ph. de Kanter, he had advocated the idea of giving local congregations the opportunity to divide themselves into ‘*kerspelen*’ (‘sub-parishes’), thus enabling all currents within the Dutch Reformed Church to attain a high degree of autonomy while apportioning church propriety proportionally and preserving the existing denominational structure. The synod, however, had rejected this plan in 1874.<sup>21</sup> In the mid-1870s, Ph.R. Hugenholtz had set himself up as one of the leading modernist protesters against certain standardised questions that aspiring members and aspiring ministers had to answer in the affirmative in order to become fully accepted into the Dutch Reformed Church. These questions were intentionally formulated so vaguely that both orthodox and modernist Protestants could interpret them in any desired way. However, they contained a reference to Jesus as the ‘only-begotten Son of God’ – a sentence that could be read symbolically, but led to much discomfort in modernist circles. Even more problematic was the fact that these questions were standardised and prescribed, which some modernists saw as ‘*formulierdwang*’ (moral restraint by denying ministers and aspiring church members the right to formulate their faith in their own words). The synod initially seemed to be willing to give in to this modernist discontentment, but in 1877 it ultimately decided, when its composition had changed, to give modernists only limited possibility to deviate from the standardised questions.<sup>22</sup> For the Hugenholtz brothers, this decision was the last straw. They could no longer stand the incoherent and – in their eyes – hypocritical policy of the synod to approve, amend and reverse cryptic formulations and ambiguous regulations in a desperate attempt to keep the unitary denominational structure of the Dutch Reformed Church intact.<sup>23</sup> In an 1877 brochure, Ph.R. Hugenholtz contrasted this with his own ideal picture of communal religious life, a picture that was completely in line with the free congregations of which Rauwenhoff had spoken ten years earlier.<sup>24</sup>

Yet, whereas Rauwenhoff had pleaded for the organic ‘dissolution’ of the existing church life, the Hugenholtz brothers decided to voluntarily leave it, a decision in which they were supported by several hundreds of Dutch Reformed liberals in Amsterdam.<sup>25</sup> Their secession was widely covered by the press and provoked discussion in liberal Protestants circles. Two modernist members of the Dutch Reformed congregation in Amsterdam immediately snatched up their pens to condemn it. The first of these anonymous pamphleteers did not understand the timing of the Hugenholtz brothers’ breakaway; in practice, there was doctrinal freedom in the Dutch Reformed Church and the 1877 synod had even created an opportunity, limited as it might be, for conscience-stricken ministers to ask members-to-be to assent to questions other than those prescribed. The modernist movement was still young and it was therefore unrealistic

<sup>21</sup> *Vervolg handelingen NHK 1873/1874*, 72.

<sup>22</sup> *Handelingen NHK 1877*, 499-500. See also: Hugenholtz, Jr., *Indrukken en herinneringen*, 146-148.

<sup>23</sup> P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Waarom gaan wij heen? Een woord van rekenschap* (Amsterdam 1877), 19-22; J.A. Groen, Jr., ‘De Vrije Gemeente honderd jaar’, *Ons Amsterdam XXIX*.10 (October 1977), 290-294; E.H. Cossee, ‘Destichting van de Vrije Gemeente, haar voorgeschiedenis en uitwerking’, in: J.D. Snel et al. (eds.), *En God bleef toch in Mokum. Amsterdamse kerkgeschiedenis in de negentiende en twintigste eeuw* (Delft 2000), 99-116, there 107-108.

<sup>24</sup> Ph.R. Hugenholtz, *De kerk en de eischen van het heden* (Amsterdam 1877), 7, 23-30.

<sup>25</sup> Ph.R. Hugenholtz, *Berusten of breken? Een woord tot de moderne leden der Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk* (Amsterdam 1877), 20-21.

to expect that a majority of churchgoers would already be won over to modernist ideas and principles – besides, Ph.R. Hugenholtz himself had been a ‘convert’ from orthodoxy to modernism, which proved that other orthodox church members might in due course undergo the same conversion. Moreover, by leaving the church, modernists intensified confessionalsists’ claim that everyone who rejected the doctrines on which the Dutch Reformed Church had been built in the sixteenth and seventeenth century and who still continued to be a church member was disingenuous.<sup>26</sup> The other pamphleteer raised similar points of criticism and put forward an additional argument not to follow Ph.R. and P.H. Hugenholtz: because modernism was, in essence, a negation of supernaturalism and an indictment of confessionalsism, and because, as a result thereof, the modernist movement derived much of its strength from its confrontation with supernaturalism and confessionalsism, modernists would *lose* much of their strength if they would leave their main battlefield, namely the Dutch Reformed Church. What is more, this pamphleteer was not only sceptical about the Hugenholtz brothers’ secession as such, but also about the step they were to take next. Were things really that much better in another denomination? And if the choice was made to organise themselves separately, would the Hugenholtz brothers’ sympathisers make enough sacrifices to create a new, sustainable community of faith out of nothing? The anonymous author did not think so.<sup>27</sup>

The modernist secessionists in Amsterdam were confronted with similar questions. Should the Remonstrant Brotherhood, the governing bodies and leading theologians of which were steering a decisively modernist course since the last couple of years, be joined? Would it be better to aspire after a reconfiguration of ecclesial life under the banner of the NPB? Or could this aspiration best be realised by founding an entirely new organisation? After some deliberation, the first question was answered in the negative. Joining the Remonstrant Brotherhood would have administrative and financial benefits. Moreover, Remonstrant congregations were not as tightly linked together as their Dutch Reformed counterparts. However, they did not meet the Hugenholtz brothers’ ideal of what a community of faith should be.<sup>28</sup> Remonstrant ministers were statutorily obliged to preach on all Christian holidays – including the festival of Whitsun, which marked the beginning of the church, and Ascension Day, which was based on a biblical narrative that could not, in contrast to the Christmas and Easter stories, easily be interpreted symbolically.<sup>29</sup> Remonstrant services included baptism and the Lord’s Supper, while new

<sup>26</sup> *Waarom blijven wij in de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk? Gedachten van een vrijzinnig lid naar aanleiding van het heengaan der heeren Hugenholtz* (Amsterdam 1877), 6, 10-16.

<sup>27</sup> *Wilt gij ook niet heengaan? Een woord aan de vrijzinnige leden der Nederduitsch Hervormde Gemeente* (Amsterdam 1877), 10-15.

<sup>28</sup> P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. rather exaggerated when he stated, in an attempt to justify his decision not to join the Remonstrant Brotherhood, that in the latter, “modernist and conservative elements are still intermingled” (“...*waar moderne en conservatieve elementen zijn dooreengemengd*.”). See: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘De stichting der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam’, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* I (1878), 9-39, there 16. Included in: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. (H. Rogaar ed.), *Bloemlezing uit de toespraken en artikelen van P.H. Hugenholtz Jr., uitgegeven te zijner nagedachtenis* (Amsterdam 1912), 4-22. Remonstrant congregations all across the country rapidly gained modernist majorities in the 1870s. There was, nonetheless, one exception: under the influence of its minister G. van der Pot, most members of the congregation in Waddinxveen remained moderately orthodox. See: Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 112-120; Vuyk, *Het einde der remonstranten*, 30.

<sup>29</sup> For contemporary modernist discussions on the question of whether Ascension Day should be preserved as a holiday, see, e.g.: D.C. de Haas, *Onze feesten beschouwd van het standpunt der nieuwe rigting voor belangstellende gemeentelieden* (Sint Annaparochie 1867); Een Noordbrabantsch kerkganger, ‘Hemelvaartsprediking?’, *De Hervorming* 1874-16 (16 April 1874), 1; E.J.W. Koch, ‘In zake de Hemelvaart’, *Ibid.* 1874-17 (23 April 1874), 3; Een Noordbrabantsch

members were officially ‘confirmed’ during special ceremonies. Remonstrant congregations continued to treat poor relief as a church affair. All of these elements of Remonstrant church life were considered to be remnants of an outmoded, supernatural view on how a community of faith should ideally be organised. The Hugenholtz brothers and their sympathisers could enter the Remonstrant Brotherhood in order to purge it from these remnants, but they waved this option aside as supercilious and insincere. Besides, their experiences in the Dutch Reformed Church had convinced them that reforming an existing organisation from within was a hopeless task.<sup>30</sup>

The biggest objection against joining the Remonstrant Brotherhood had to do with the dogmatic history of this church denomination and the remains thereof in its rules and regulations. The Hugenholtz group thought that the Brotherhood was still founded on the so-called ‘Five Articles of Remonstrance’,<sup>31</sup> a 1611 document that, although toning down Calvinist teachings regarding the way humans are elected by God to attain eternal salvation, did not challenge doctrines such as predestination and salvation through Christ alone.<sup>32</sup> In its articles of association adopted in 1861, the Remonstrant Brotherhood was called “a Christian church community in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ, in accordance with the Scriptures, is professed and preached in freedom and tolerance.”<sup>33</sup> This called up associations with the ambiguously formulated rules of the Dutch Reformed Church. The reference to the “Gospel of Jesus” was both rather narrow, having orthodox connotations, and indistinct. The phrase “in accordance with the Scriptures” was just as puzzling. Did the authors of the statement of principles of the Remonstrant Brotherhood, enacted in 1861, mean to say that the said Scriptures – “*which* Scriptures,” Hugenholtz added with pretended ignorance, “remains unclear” – are the sources through which the Gospel reaches man, or that church life should exclusively be based on these Scriptures? Hugenholtz did not doubt Remonstrants’ commitment to a modernist way of believing, but abhorred phraseology that referred to their forefathers’ supernaturalist world view.<sup>34</sup> He reiterated this grievance in 1879, when the aim of the Remonstrant Brotherhood was reformulated into the “advance[ment] of religious life, in accordance with its principle of freedom and tolerance, on the basis of the

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kerkganger, ‘Waardoor wordt de moderne richting in discredit gebracht?’, *Ibid.* 1874-18 (30 April 1874), 1; E.J.W. Koch, ‘Nog iets over het Hemelvaartsfeest’, *Ibid.* 1874-19 (7 May 1874), 3; Een Noordbrabantsch kerkganger, ‘Nog iets over het Hemelvaartsfeest’, *Ibid.* 1874-20 (14 May 1874), 1-2; [F.C.A. Pantekoek in:] ‘De derde Nederlandsche Protestantendag’, *Ibid.* 1875-45 (11 November 1875), 2-3, there 3; I. Hooykaas, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1875-46 (18 November 1875), 3-4; F.C.A. Pantekoek, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1875-48 (2 December 1875), 2-3; [H.C. Lohr], ‘Hemelvaartsdag’, *Ibid.* 1876-21 (25 May 1876), 2; A.G. van Hamel, ‘Christelijke feesten’, *Ibid.* 1879-20 (17 May 1879), 77-78; ‘De weg naar boven’, *Ibid.* 1881-21 (28 May 1881), 81-82. Later examples are: L. Knappert, *Onze Christelijke feestdagen* (Amsterdam [1890] 1908); H.T. de Graaf, ‘Onze kerkelijke feestdagen’, *Teekenen des Tijds* VIII (1906), 371-398.

<sup>30</sup> Cossee, ‘De stichting van de Vrije Gemeente’, 109-110.

<sup>31</sup> Referred to in: ‘Binnenland – Meeting in de Keizerskroon’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* L.14694 (11 November 1877), 1-2, there 1.

<sup>32</sup> In a lecture held during a meeting of the *Vereeniging tot bevordering van zelfstandig godsdienstig leven*, on 20 November 1877, Remonstrant minister J.W. Bok (1831-1889) countered this claim. He stated that the Remonstrant Brotherhood had never given any formal status to the Five Articles of Remonstrance and implied that there was no conflict between the principles of modernism and the principles on which the Brotherhood was based. See: J.W. Bok, *Is “de Remonstrantsche Broederschap op vijf Arminiaansche artikelen gegrond”? Toespraak, gehouden in de vereeniging “Zelfstandig godsdienstig leven” op 20 November 1877* (Amsterdam 1877), 24.

<sup>33</sup> “...eene Christelijke kerkgemeenschap, in welke het Evangelie van Jezus Christus overeenkomstig de Schriften [...] wordt beleden en verkondigd.” Quoted from: *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 67-68.

<sup>34</sup> Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘De stichting der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam’, 14-15.

Gospel of Jesus Christ.”<sup>35</sup> This phrasing resembled the aim of the NPB to advance the free development of religious life.

The second option the Hugenholtz brothers and their sympathisers had, finding shelter under the wings of the NPB, was never taken into serious consideration, although it seemed to be a rather obvious thing to do. After all, the NPB not only wanted to support churchgoing liberal Protestants, but also modernists who had broken with church life altogether. Moreover, its local branches enjoyed a high degree of autonomy, and those that offered religious services basically functioned as free congregations. Yet, as said before, they closely resembled denominational congregations both in structure and liturgy, and were not supposed to compete with such congregations. Apparently, this prevented the Amsterdam secessionists from organising themselves within the NPB: it was not their goal to reinforce the position of ecclesial modernism, but to have all the freedom to shape a faith community without any church characteristics – freedom that neither the Remonstrant Brotherhood nor the NPB was able to fully give them. Moreover, they probably thought that it would be rather inconsistent to organise themselves under the colours of an organisation that tried to strengthen the position of modernism within the denomination they had just left.<sup>36</sup>

Although the Hugenholtz brothers continued to be (highly) involved with the NPB, lecturing at its meetings and serving on its committees, they therefore decided not to constitute a new modernist faith community under the flag of the NPB. On 30 November 1877, they and their followers founded the independent ‘Free Congregation’. It held its first official religious gathering on 3 February 1878.<sup>37</sup> The Free Congregation was intended to be a radical break with traditional church life. Instead of asking for legal recognition as a religious denomination, its founders requested the government to recognise the Free Congregation as a ‘regular’ voluntary association. It was administrated by an executive committee instead of governed by a consistory of a minister, elders and deacons. These church offices were principally rejected. The Free Congregation did have a permanent pastor, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., but he was addressed as ‘voorganger’ (literally: the one who conducts a service) instead of with the ecclesial term ‘predikant’ (‘reverend’). By so doing, it was stressed that the ministry did not require some kind of special ‘ordination’ or ‘authorisation’. The Free Congregation did not need to have elders, as it

<sup>35</sup> “...getrouw aan haar beginsel van vrijheid en verdraagzaamheid, op den grondslag van het Evangelie van Jezus Christus, het godsdienstig leven te bevorderen.” Quoted from: Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 74. The expression ‘the Gospel of Jesus Christ’ undoubtedly reminded the Hugenholtz brothers too much of a church.

<sup>36</sup> As P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. later indicated, he felt that the development of the NPB in retrospect fully justified the decision to found the Free Congregation outside of its framework. While the NPB should be an association for the advancement of the free development of religious life and a league in which both churchgoing and nondenominational modernists could work together, many of its branches were preoccupied with strengthening modernists’ position in the Dutch Reformed Church. See: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Afscheidswoord aan de leden en vrienden der Vrije Gemeente* (Amsterdam 1909), 15. In 1906, when J. van Loenen Martinet stated to see no theoretical or practical obstacle for the Free Congregation to incorporate itself into the NPB, Hugenholtz again explained why the NPB could not be the organisation under whose banner the Free Congregation could exist: the former tried to enhance the free development of religious life *within* the churches, whereas the latter did not. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De “Vrije Gemeente” te Amsterdam’, *De Hervorming* 1906-12 (24 March 1906), 90-91, there 91; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Berichten, enz. – De Vrije Gemeente’, *Ibid.* 1906-13 (31 March 1906), 100. Already in 1897, Van Loenen Martinet had written that, from 1877 onwards, he had been disappointed that Free Congregation had not constituted itself within the framework of the NPB. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De Vrije Gemeente’, *Ibid.* 1897-49 (4 December 1897), 194.

<sup>37</sup> L. Knappert, *Godsdienstig Nederland* (Huis ter Heide 1928), 172-173; Cossee, ‘De stichting van de Vrije Gemeente’, 109-110.

did not try to discipline its members in doctrinal matters. For several reasons, it was decided not to appoint deacons either. The deaconry, responsible for assisting poor and needy members of a particular congregation, was a rather controversial institution in parts of the modernist movement. Some modernists, including the Hugenholtz brothers, were of the opinion that a community of faith should not concern itself with material matters, such as poor relief. Deacons only assisted fellow church members, giving the impression that like-mindedness was a prerequisite to be helped and potentially giving (poor) people a wrong motive to join a congregation. Obtaining membership of a community of faith and relieving the distress of the poor should, the first members of the Free Congregation felt, never be intertwined. These activities only had value if they were individual expressions of genuine religious belief. Social welfare work should only be conducted in non-church associations that supported anyone in need, regardless of his denominational affiliation and convictions about life.<sup>38</sup>

The Free Congregation not only gave short shrift to church practices in the way it was structured. It got rid of everything that smacked of supernaturalism in its Sunday gatherings as well. Baptism and the Lord's Supper were seen as "too old-fashioned and too timeworn to be successfully regenerated."<sup>39</sup> These sacraments were believed to have no meaning whatsoever, not even a symbolic one, in a modern world view and were hence abolished.<sup>40</sup> The same went for Whitsun and Ascension Day.<sup>41</sup> Christmas and Easter were preserved as festivals, as they were considered to be connected to the annual cycle of nature and the emotions that different stages of this cycle arouse in humans. Christmas was celebrated as the feast of light and the enlightenment of the mind. Easter was solemnised as the feast of regeneration and the triumph of Good over Evil. In addition, Reformation Day was celebrated in honour of the Protestant principle of liberty of conscience, of which the Free Congregation claimed to be the purest bearer.<sup>42</sup> Instead of a sermon, a lecture that was supposed to excite 'religious feelings' was the central point of Sunday gatherings. Such a lecture did not have to be exclusively based on a biblical parable. To quote P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr.:

We do not limit ourselves to the Bible. The entire Bible of mankind lies open in front of us! We wish to be inspired by the hymns of Indians and Persians, the proverbs of Buddha and Confucius, the wisdom of Greeks and Romans. Augustine and Schleiermacher, Luther and Schiller, Shakespeare and [Theodore] Parker, Spinoza and [Joost van den] Vondel and ... so many other great and good people, who all praise, in their own language, the magnificent works of God.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> However, in the 1880s, an association affiliated to the Free Congregation, called '*De Helpende Hand*' ('The Helping Hand'), was founded that conducted welfare activities closely resembling church social welfare work. See: *Wat wil de Vrije Gemeente?* (s.l. s.a.), 8. Fehr wrongfully states that *De Helpende Hand* was founded in 1899. See: A.J. Fehr, *Kerk en kerkgaan XIII. De Vrije Gemeente* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 6-7.

<sup>39</sup> "...te verouderd en te versleten om er nog nieuw leven in te kunnen blazen." Quoted in: Cossee, 'De stichting van de Vrije Gemeente', 111. See also: Y. Hiemstra, 'Neem, eet, drink. Over het doen van religie', in: H.S. Benjamins, J. Offringa and W.H. Slob (eds.), *Liberaal christendom. Ervaren, doen, denken* (Vught 2016), 140-147, there 143-144.

<sup>40</sup> 'Onze leestafel – "Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente"', *De Hervorming* 1878-19 (11 May 1878), 4; 1878-20 (18 May 1878), 3-4; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Waarom geen doop?', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* I (1878), 99-116; *Wat wil de Vrije Gemeente?*, 4-6.

<sup>41</sup> 'Binnenland – Amsterdam', *De Hervorming* 1878-01 (5 January 1878), 2; Hugenholtz, Jr., 'De stichting der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam', 36.

<sup>42</sup> J.H. Gunning, *Het protestantsche Nederland onzer dagen. Uit een kerkelijk-godsdienstig oogpunt beschouwd en historisch toegelicht* (Groningen 1899), 136.

<sup>43</sup> "...we bepalen ons niet tot den bijbel alleen. Heel de bijbel der menschheid ligge hier voor ons open! Aan de liederen van Indiërs en Perzen, aan de spreken van Buddha en Kong-fu-tse, aan de wijsheid van Grieken en Romeinen wen-



As this statement indicates, the Free Congregation had, notwithstanding its Protestant roots, strong universalistic tendencies. The upright and idealistic attitude of life after which all sincere Truth-seekers aspired might be most clearly personified in the figure of Jesus the Nazarene,<sup>44</sup> but the founders of the Free Congregation thought it was worth listening to virtuous voices outside of the Christian tradition as well. In every expression of religious life, they believed, something of the divine shines through. Yet their receptiveness went hand in hand with criticism of religion. Because all existing religions were inextricable mixtures of divine inspiration and human imagination, none of these could be the basic constituent of a universal religion. By inciting people to search for the elements of Truth in all faiths, the Free Congregation wanted to contribute to the origination of this universal religion, “to the development of the spiritual Volapük, which will enable all nations to understand the common language of Freedom, Fraternity and Character in religion, which will overcome all barriers raised up by seas and creeds, and unite all human beings into the general brotherhood of the family of mankind.”<sup>45</sup>

However, a dogmatic mentality on the one hand and a materialistic attitude to life on the other hand had to be challenged before this universal religion could ever come into being. Instilling a liberal mentality into the generations of the future was therefore a priority of the Free Congregation.<sup>46</sup> Passing on biblical knowledge to youngsters was particularly important, because familiarity with Old and New Testament stories was seen as a necessity to be able to understand and fully appreciate ‘civilised’ culture as well to cultivate pure religious insights and feelings,<sup>47</sup> but religious education should entail more than that. It should also make juveniles acquainted with non-Christian wisdom and help them to reflect upon burning social questions as high-principled individuals. The obtainment of membership was not, as it was in the churches, seen as the evident result of a successful completion of confirmation classes; one could become a member without having received religious education. Contrary to (Dutch Reformed) church life, no distinction was made between male and female members: women also had a say in affairs concerning the entire congregation.<sup>48</sup> All of this evinced that the Free Congregation saw itself as the ‘experimental garden’ where the faith community of the future was shaped. Its founders and members had no doubt whatsoever that it was the prototype after which all religious institutions would ultimately be modeled. Although *De Hervorming* suggested that many modernists would (ultimately) follow the Hugenholtz brothers’ example, the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam was not copied elsewhere in the Netherlands.<sup>49</sup>

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*schen wij onze gedachten te ontleenen. Augustinus en Schleiermacher, Luther en Schiller, Shakespeare en Parker, Spinoza en Vondel en ... zooveel andere grooten en goeden mogen beurtelings tot ons spreken, verkondigende, elk in zijn taal, de groote werken Gods.”* Quoted from: Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘De stichting der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam’, 31.

<sup>44</sup> Ph.R. Hugenholtz, ‘Het christelijk karakter onzer vroomheid’, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente I* (1878), 62-82, there 65-67.

<sup>45</sup> “...aan de ontwikkeling van dat geestelijk Volapük, dat alle volken in staat zal stellen de gemeenschappelijke taal te verstaan van Vrijheid, Broederschap en Karakter in den godsdienst, welke taal de hinderpaal van zeeën en geloofsbelijdenissen zal overwinnen en alle menschen vereenigen tot de algemeene broederschap van de familie der menschheid.” Quoted from: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Licht en schaduw. Indrukken van het godsdienstig leven in Amerika* (Amsterdam 1888), 78. Volapük is an artificial language, which had some popularity at the same time.

<sup>46</sup> Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘De stichting der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam’, 30.

<sup>47</sup> P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. accentuated this in: Hugenholtz, Jr., *Afscheidswoord*, 14.

<sup>48</sup> *Wat wil de Vrije Gemeente?*, 5, 20.

<sup>49</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘1878’, *De Hervorming* 1878-01 (5 January 1878), 1. In 1918, a free congregation, modelled after the one in Amsterdam, came into being in The Hague. Its founding was the outcome of a conflict

Although the founding of other free congregations outside of Amsterdam did not occur at the time, the ideal of at least loosening the bonds between congregations within the Dutch Reformed Church in particular was, as said before, more widespread among modernists in the 1870s and 1880s. Kuyperians shared that ideal.<sup>50</sup> In 1873, Kuyper and Ph.R. Hugenholtz had been members of a committee that suggested splitting the unitary Dutch Reformed congregation in Amsterdam into several sub-parishes, in an attempt to give all church factions the freedom to take care of their own affairs.<sup>51</sup> While he applauded the Hugenholtz brothers for voluntarily leaving the Dutch Reformed Church in 1877, as he saw them as modernists who candidly acknowledged that modernism did not belong in the Dutch Reformed Church, and as he hoped that their secession would be the beginning of a thorough reconfessionalisation of this entire denomination,<sup>52</sup> Kuyper would come to the conclusion that it was best for him and his followers to cut through the bond that kept the Dutch Reformed congregations together as well. Although they claimed to be the doctrinally pure and hence legitimate continuation of the church of the Reformation in the Netherlands, their decision to ‘go into *Doleantie*’ (to renounce the authority of the Dutch Reformed synod) in 1886 and subsequent years ultimately came down to the same thing as the Hugenholtz brothers had done nine years beforehand: they seceded from the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>53</sup> Due to this similarity, theologian A.J. Rasker typifies the founding of the Free Congregation in retrospect as a “*Doleantie* to the left.”<sup>54</sup> Just as P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., who had implied that the Free Congregation could become part of a larger denomination consisting of similar religiously liberal congregations,<sup>55</sup> Kuyper advocated the formation of an alliance of congregations on the basis of doctrinal like-mindedness as well,<sup>56</sup> leading to the formation of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in 1892.

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in the local Remonstrant congregation between ministers K.F. Sparnaay (1875-1947) and J.C. Wannée. The latter was less willing to give laymen a stronger say in congregational life than the former. Moreover, while Wannée stood, theologically speaking, at the extreme left of the modernist movement, right-wing modernism was becoming dominant in the Remonstrant Brotherhood at the time. With several sympathisers, Wannée left the Remonstrant Brotherhood to found a congregation in which Christianity was treated no differently from any other world religion. In the early 1920s, he caused some controversy in modernist circles by using the slogan ‘*los van het Christendom*’ (‘detached from Christianity’). See: A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De nieuwe Vrije Gemeente in Den Haag’, *Ibid.* 1918-27 (6 July 1918), 107; *Vrije Gemeente te 's-Gravenhage* (s.l. 1918); ‘De tweede Vrije Gemeente’, *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* I.6 (1918), 4-6; ‘De Haagsche Vrije Gemeente’, *Ibid.* I.7 (1918), 11-13; I.8 (1918), 7-8; J.C. Wannée, *Religieuze levens- en wereldbeschouwing (los van het Christendom)* (Zeist [1920] 1922); S. Hofstra, ‘De nieuwere religieuze bewegingen in ons land’, *Mensch en Maatschappij* III.6 (1927), 519-543, there 528; Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 291-293. When Wannée passed away in 1946, the Free Congregation in The Hague ceased to exist. In 1958, the Free Congregation in Amsterdam founded an annex in The Hague. At the time, it already had annexes in Haarlem, Doetinchem and Utrecht. See: ‘Vrije Gemeente-kring Den Haag opgericht’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* CXXX.42561 (18 February 1958), 2. In 1984, an annex to the Free Congregation in Amsterdam opened its doors in Twente, the easternmost part of the Netherlands. Together with the one in The Hague, it was the only annex to the Free Congregation that still existed at the beginning of the twenty-first century. See: Hoekstra and Ipenburg, *Handboek Christelijk Nederland*, 307-309.

<sup>50</sup> Nijenhuis, ‘De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk en de Doleantie’, 185-187.

<sup>51</sup> This committee had drawn up regulations regarding the formation of sub-parishes, which are integrally published in: A. Kuyper and F.L. Rutgers, *Contra-memorie in zake het Amsterdamsch conflict* (Amsterdam 1886), 70-72.

<sup>52</sup> [A. Kuyper], ‘De aftocht der gebroeders Hugenholtz’, *De Standaard* VI.1722 (2 November 1877), 1.

<sup>53</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 43-45; K.M. Witteveen, ‘Het modernisme en de Doleantie’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXII/XXIII (1986), 53-56.

<sup>54</sup> “...*Doleantie naar links*...” Quoted from: Rasker, *De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*, 217. See also: Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 47.

<sup>55</sup> Hugenholtz, Jr., *Waarom gaan wij heen?*, 35-36.

<sup>56</sup> A. Kuyper, *Tractaat van de reformatie der kerken*, 77-80; D. Deddens, ‘De kerken van de Doleantie’, in: W. van ’t Spijker and L.C. van Drimmelen (eds.), *Inleiding tot de studie van het kerkrecht* (Kampen 1992), 134-145.

### 3. Disappointment and Renewed Appreciation for the Institution of the Church

The fact that the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam proved to be a singular event led to disappointment among those modernists who thought that the free congregation would eventually replace the church as the common organisational form of religious communities. At the 1880 annual NPB meeting, Dutch Reformed theologian H.U. Meyboom (1842-1933), one of the most passionate advocates of the ideal of the free congregation, gave vent to this disillusionment. In his eyes, all churches, including those with a modernist character, were based on the supercilious belief that they represented or realised the Kingdom of God on earth, as they shrouded themselves with a false aura of exceptionality and sanctity by accepting new-borns and new members into their midst during ritualistic, ostentatious ceremonies. He had hoped that the founding of the Free Congregation would mark the beginning of the ultimate eradication of this “ecclesial inveracity,” but, to his sorrow, “a lack of enthusiasm” had restrained modernists outside the Dutch capital from following the Hugenholtz brothers’ example.<sup>57</sup> Also in 1880, Rauwenhoff expressed himself in a similar vein in the *Theologisch Tijdschrift*. Evaluating, among other things, the realisation of the views on church reform that he had set forth in 1867, he noticed that nothing had changed and therefore dropped his hope that the church could ever be reformed from within. The only way to create the conditions for religious life to be thoroughly regenerated was to “restore the true congregation – the original, the only genuine form of religious life. The true congregation, that is to say the community life of kindred spirits, based on freedom and self-determination.” However, he did not harbour any illusions about a successful reconfiguration of the denominational landscape into free congregations: he expected to meet with little sympathy from his fellow modernists. Hinting on the apparent unwillingness of most modernists to experiment with new forms of religious communities outside the existing churches, he complained: “it seems to me that most [modernists] think and search in another direction than I do.”<sup>58</sup>

Several years later, in 1885, another supporter of free congregations joined the ranks of the disillusioned. In the article with which he took leave of *De Hervorming*, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. told his readership that the events that had occurred in the Protestant domain in the recent past, including the limited support the Hugenholtz brothers had received in 1877

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<sup>57</sup> “...kerkelijke leugen...”; “Het ontbrak aan geestdrift...” Quoted from: [H.U. Meyboom in:] ‘Tiende jaarfeest van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond te Deventer gevierd’, *De Hervorming* 1880-46 (13 November 1880), 181-183, there 182. At the meeting of modern theologians in 1922, Meyboom explicitly stated that it was not just a lack of enthusiasm, but a general lack of *reform-mindedness* among modernists that had caused the latter to keep existing church structures as they were. See: F. Dijkema, ‘In den stroom – Vergadering van moderne theologen’, *De Stroom* I.21 (6 May 1922), 2.

<sup>58</sup> “...herstelling der ware gemeente, de oorspronkelijke, de eenig waarachtige vorm van godsdienstig leven. De ware gemeente, namelijk het op den grondslag van vrijheid en zelfwerkzaamheid gebouwde gemeenschapsleven van geestverwanten.”; “Het schijnt mij, dat het zoeken en denken der meesten thans een andere richting dan die ik zou wenschen te volgen.” Quoted from: L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, ‘Idealisme zonder ideaal’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* XIV (1880), 1-26, there 23-24. In spite of these words, Rauwenhoff would never leave the church himself. Being frustrated by the orthodox dominance in the Dutch Reformed congregation in his domicile Leiden, he decided to join the local Walloon Reformed church, which had a modernist minister at the time, in 1882. See: Slis, *L.W.E. Rauwenhoff*, 42. In response to Rauwenhoff’s 1880 article, W. Zaalberg argued that most modernists continued to cling to the institution of the church, because a better type of organisation in which they could spread their principles had yet to be found, because the majority of the Dutch people remained attached to church life, and because they still cherished the hope that they could reform church life within its existing structures. See: W. Zaalberg, *Realisme of idealisme zonder ideaal? Naar aanleiding van prof. Rauwenhoff’s stuk “Idealisme zonder ideaal”* (Tiel 1880), 20-21.

and subsequent years, were a disappointment to him. Yet, instead of being defeatist, he had gradually adapted his expectations to the finding that the Free Congregation in Amsterdam had not created a precedent. Hugenholtz still believed in the ideal of the free congregation – accentuated by his future career as a pastor of such a congregation in Grand Rapids –, but he now argued that secessionism was not something to strive for. The Dutch Reformed Church should not be handed over to orthodoxy, as the continued presence of modernists in its midst could be “salutary for the church itself and our nation.” There was no reason for modernists who suffered from confessionalist domineeringness to resign their membership of the Dutch Reformed Church, as the NPB could give them shelter and could simultaneously serve as a fortified bunker from which they could combat the imperiousness of their orthodox fellow church members.<sup>59</sup>

Van Loenen Martinet was more defeatist. On the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Free Congregation, in 1887, he stated to regret that the “brilliant future” of which it had been a foreshadowing had not come true. According to him, the Hugenholtz brothers had pointed out the direction in which the modernist movement should have gone. Yet, because modernists did not have the courage or the decisiveness to take that direction in the last ten years, Van Loenen Martinet questioned whether they would be able to create new communities of their own when – not if – orthodoxy would have permanently expelled them from the churches.<sup>60</sup> To him, nothing seemed to indicate that the modernist movement was willing to make the efforts necessary to reform church life, which in its current form severely hindered its development.

Just one year before he wrote the words above, Van Loenen Martinet had cherished the hope that a thorough reformation of church life was finally on its way. The *Doleantie* had created the momentum for this. Van Loenen Martinet was not the only modernist to think in this way; among those modernists who upheld the ideal of the free congregation, there was a good deal of sympathy for Kuyper’s views on how church life should be structured. After all, just as they themselves, Kuyper did not want to preserve the existing denominational structure of the Dutch Reformed Church, and was therefore someone with whom they could talk about a peaceful division of the joint church property. For that reason, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. had praised Kuyper for founding the Free University in Amsterdam in 1880, seeing it as a prelude to the foundation of a free orthodox Calvinist Church and thus as a dissolution of the Dutch Reformed Church along factional lines.<sup>61</sup> When the first Kuyperian-minded congregations decided to no longer accept the authority of the Dutch Reformed synod, Van Loenen Martinet reacted with similar enthusiasm; now, the opportunity to reorganise ecclesial structures and to resolve the on-going church conflicts once and for all had presented itself. Modernists should seize this opportunity, as it could free them from the galling bonds that hindered their movement from growing and blossoming. With the *Doleantie*, Van Loenen Martinet felt, not only modernist self-interests were at stake, but also the triumph of justice, both in a legal and in a moral sense. The *Doleantie* was a cry of conscience, as the Kuyperians could not live up to their principles by accepting the Dutch Reformed Church as it was. The *Doleantie* was thus a morally legitimate

<sup>59</sup> “...in wier blijven en meedoen voor onze kerk en ons volk nog een zegen liggen kan.” Quoted from: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., ‘Binnenland – Ten afscheid’, *De Hervorming* 1885-39 (26 September 1885), 154-155, there 155.

<sup>60</sup> “...schoone toekomst...” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Na tien jaren’, *Ibid.* 1887-49 (3 December 1887), 194-195, there 195.

<sup>61</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Opening van de Vrije Universiteit’, *Ibid.* 1880-43 (23 October 1880), 170-171, there 171.

act and its supporters were consequently fully entitled to lay claim to a proportional part of the material belongings of the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>62</sup> In turn, this denomination, Van Loenen Martinet further argued, ethically disqualified itself by striking from its books the names of members who had – in his eyes – valid grievances against its organisation.<sup>63</sup> H. Vrendenberg Cz. agreed. Expelling Kuyper and his sympathisers was not a principled thing to do and would not settle the factional struggle that had been raging within the Dutch Reformed Church for so long. Rather, a peaceful and hence ethically ‘correct’ separation should be sought, which could only be found if all anti-Kuyperians were willing to negotiate with the Kuyperians. Frenetically trying to keep heterogeneous groups together was not in the interest of any of these groups, Vrendenberg concluded.<sup>64</sup>

However, the great majority of modernists, abhorring Kuyperian demagoguery and seeing the *Doleantie* as an expression of intolerant fanaticism, made common cause with Kuyper’s orthodox and moderately orthodox opponents. Van Loenen Martinet and others, such as W. Zaalberg and minister-entrepreneur E.J.F. van Dissel (1827-1922), warned these modernists not to be fooled by the circumstances of the moment: as soon as the current ecclesial storm died down, non-modernists would resume their attempt to purge the Dutch Reformed Church from modernism.<sup>65</sup> In 1889, after a worldly judge had definitively rejected all of the Kuyperians’ claims to church property, Van Loenen Martinet therefore stated to see it as a missed chance that most modernists had sided against Kuyper: “modernists have not given the *gereformeerden* the chance to be themselves within the [existing] denominational boundaries, within the existing administrative structure. As a result, they have thrown away the chance to create a similar opportunity [the opportunity to live up to their principles within the Dutch Reformed Church, TK] for themselves.” In fact, the *Doleantie* could have been averted altogether if modernists had not been indifferent and had ardently striven for a *modus vivendi* – which Kuyper himself had propagated as a halfway stage towards a harmonious dissolution of the Dutch Reformed Church – prior to 1886. Instead, most modernists apparently believed that the voluntary or forced exodus of Kuyperians would be a blessing for them.<sup>66</sup> Van Loenen Martinet was right to see

<sup>62</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Waarom?’, *Ibid.* 1887-26 (25 June 1887), 102; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland’, *Ibid.* 1887-30 (23 July 1887), 118. See also: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Kerk en maatschappij doleerende’, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* X (1887), 33-45, there 34-35.

<sup>63</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland’, *De Hervorming* 1886-31 (31 July 1886), 125. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Wat is de vraag?’, *Ibid.* 1887-28 (9 July 1887), 110-111.

<sup>64</sup> H. Vrendenberg Cz., ‘De maatregelen tegen de doleerenden en de mogelijkheid van een minnelijk uitgaan’, *Ibid.* 1887-32 (6 August 1887), 126; 1887-33 (13 August 1887), 130; H. Vrendenberg Cz., ‘Art. 11 en het doleeren’, *Ibid.* 1887-38 (17 September 1887), 150; H. Vrendenberg Cz., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Uitbannen of scheiden?’, *Ibid.* 1887-43 (22 October 1887), 171-172. Later, Vrendenberg began to doubt whether Kuyperians were as committed to a peaceful parting of the ways as they said they were; he could not get away from the impression that Kuyperians actually enjoyed being prosecuted by the Dutch Reformed synod. See: H. Vrendenberg Cz., ‘Over erkende kerkgenootschappen, over doleerenden en over de synode’, *Ibid.* 1888-35 (1 September 1888), 138-139.

<sup>65</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Een dreigend gevaar’, *Ibid.* 1886-04 (23 January 1886), 14-15, there 15; W. Zaalberg, ‘Staat in de vrijheid’, *Ibid.* 1886-09 (27 February 1886), 33-34, there 33; V.D., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1886-52 (25 December 1886), 210; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Uit de hoofdstad’, *Ibid.* 1887-01 (1 January 1887), 3; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Uitgebracht!’, *Ibid.* 1887-10 (5 March 1887), 39; E.J.F. van Dissel, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1887-13 (26 March 1887), 51; 1887-17 (23 April 1887), 68. See also: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 43-44; Witteveen, ‘Het modernisme en de Doleantie’, 54-55.

<sup>66</sup> “[De modernen] hebben den gereformeerden de kans niet gegund, om binnen den kerkgenootschappelijken omtrek, binnen den nu eenmaal getrokken administratieven kring, zich zelf te wezen; zij hebben daarmede de kans verspeeld,

this as a miscalculation; his expectation that the factional struggle within the Dutch Reformed Church would quickly recommence proved to be true.

Among those who believed in the ideal of the free congregation, there was also discontentment about the exodus of Dutch Reformed modernists to other denominations, particularly the Remonstrant Brotherhood. In some places, this exodus took such proportions that entirely new Remonstrant congregations came into existence. This was the case in Arnhem and Groningen in 1878, in Lochem and Meppel in 1879, in Doesburg in 1884, in Hoogeveen in 1886, in Dordrecht in 1897 and in Vlaardingen in 1908.<sup>67</sup> The influx of Dutch Reformed modernists into the community of Mennonites and the Evangelical Lutheran Church had, with some notable exceptions,<sup>68</sup> a more incidental character and was therefore considerably smaller.<sup>69</sup>

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*om dergelijke mogelijkheid voor zichzelf te openen.*" Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Toch een leuze', *De Hervorming* 1889-02 (12 January 1889), 7.

<sup>67</sup> F. Delhez, *Remonstrantsch gereformeerde gemeente te Dordrecht, 1897-1922. Iets uit het leven der gemeente* (s.l. [1922]); E.J. Wilzen-Bruins, *De remonstrantse kerk te Meppel* (Meppel 1945); E.W.H. Laman Trip-Kleinstarink, *Kerkelijk leven in Arnhem. Historisch-sociografische schets, in het bijzonder van de remonstrants gereformeerde gemeente* (s.l. 1958); E.H. Cossee et al., *Eenheid in het nodige. Gedenkboekje, samengesteld t.g.v. het 80-jarig bestaan der remonstrants gereformeerde gemeente te Dordrecht* (Dordrecht 1977); E.H. Cossee, 'De remonstrantse gemeente te Dordrecht', *Kwartaal en Tekenen van Dordrecht* IV.1 (1978), 5-12; G.J. Hoenderdaal et al., *De remonstrantse gemeente te Arnhem honderd jaar* (Arnhem 1978); E. Huizinga et al. (eds.), *Arminianen in Groningerland. Terugblik en uitzicht* (Groningen 1978); G. Bloemendaal et al., *Remonstrantse gemeente te Lochem, 1879-1979. Feestboek ter gelegenheid van het 100-jarig bestaan van de remonstrantse gemeente te Lochem* ([Lochem 1979]); *Beknopt overzicht van de geschiedenis der remonstrantse gemeente te Meppel van 17 december 1879 tot 15 december 1979, naar aanleiding van het 100-jarig bestaan* ([Meppel 1979]); Roest, *Vrije vogels*; S.G. Fonk et al., *Gedenkschrift 1885-1985. Remonstrantse gemeente Doesburg* (Doesburg 1985); J.P. Boers-Sterken and R. Velema, *Remonstrantse gemeente te Hoogeveen 1886-1986* (Hoogeveen [1986]); E.H. Cossee, "'Wij hebben wat anders en beters te doen". Ds. B.J.C. Mosselmans en de stichting der remonstrantse gemeente te Groningen', in: G. van Halsema et al. (eds.), *Geloven in Groningen. Capita selecta uit de geloofsgeschiedenis van een stad* (Kampen 1990), 261-266; J.F. van Eck et al., *Vrijheid en verdraagzaamheid, 1897-1997. Jubileumboekje, samengesteld ter gelegenheid van het 100-jarig bestaan van de remonstrantse gemeente Dordrecht* (Dordrecht 1997); C. Beelaerts van Emmichoven, 'De remonstranten in Lochem', *Belvédère* VIII.1 (March 1998), 24-31; VIII.2 (June 1998), 40-44; VIII.3 (November 1998), 26-33; IX.2 (July 1999), 17-21; IX.3 (December 1999), 4-8; X.1 (May 2000), 43-44; X.3 (December 2000), 27-31; XI.2 (September 2001), 31-34; XI.3 (December 2001), 38-42; E.H. Cossee, 'Het modernisme in de classis', in: H. ten Boom et al. (eds.), *Geloof, opbouw en strijd. De geschiedenis van de classis Rotterdam* (Delft 2001), 107-128, there 124-126; F. van Eck, *Huis van steen en woord. Remonstrantse kerk 1901-2001* (Dordrecht 2001); J. Meinema and T.E. Puister, "...een in waarheid vrijzinnige gemeente". *Beknopte geschiedschrijving van de remonstrantse gemeente Groningen* (Groningen 2003); Barnard, *Van "verstoten kind" tot belijdende kerk*, 194-204, 281-285.

<sup>68</sup> In 1877, after the last modernist-minded minister in the Dutch Reformed congregation in Harlingen had been replaced by an orthodox one, most modernist-minded members of that congregation joined the local Evangelical Lutheran congregation. See: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Een verdrukte minderheid, die zichzelf geholpen heeft', *De Hervorming* 1877-40 (6 October 1877), 2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – De moderne gemeente te Harlingen', *Ibid.* 1879-16 (19 April 1879), 65; 1879-44 (1 November 1879), 174-175; M.J. van Lennep, 'De lutherse gemeente te Harlingen', *Samen Leven. Jaarboek van de evangelisch-lutherse zendingsraad* I (1975), 476-481, there 478. In 1889, a significant amount of modernist-minded members of the Dutch Reformed congregation in Goes joined the local Mennonite congregation to make sure that their children would receive religious education in a modernist spirit. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Naar aanleiding van een bericht uit Goes', *De Hervorming* 1889-41 (12 October 1889), 163; Ph.M. van der Mandere, 'Uit Goes', *Ibid.* 1889-50 (14 December 1889), 201; E.H. Cossee, 'De doopsgezinden en de opkomst van het modernisme in Nederland', *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks* XX (1994), 219-239, there 234.

<sup>69</sup> Lutheran minister J.W. Pont (1863-1939) argued that the growth and flourishing of Lutheran congregations largely depended on the situation in nearby Reformed congregations: if the latter had an orthodox majority, the former tended to be liberal-minded and could welcome, at least temporarily, a considerable number of Reformed modernists in their religious services. See: J.W. Pont, *De Luthersche Kerk in Nederland* (Baarn 1908), 45-46. Drijver thought that the influx of Reformed liberals into the Evangelical Lutheran Church was significant enough to make mention of it in a brief overview of Lutheran history in the Netherlands. See: D. Drijver, *Kerk en kerkgaan* VIII. *De Lutherschen* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 11.

For Dutch Reformed modernists, these denominations exerted less attraction than the Remonstrant Brotherhood, because Mennonites practised adult baptism, which determined the cultural atmosphere in their communities,<sup>70</sup> and because modernists were not much better off in the Lutheran Church, which also had a large orthodox bloc. Modernist opinion leaders such as F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. and H.U. Meyboom complained that an interdenominational circulation of modernists did not help the modernist movement in any way. They repeatedly stressed that the Remonstrant Brotherhood might welcome modernists with open arms, but was still a *church* in the traditional sense of the word.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, as Hugenholtz explained, the founding of a free congregation would have much more impact than the constituting of a Remonstrant one, as it would create “a shock throughout the country” and could accordingly set a process of reform in motion. Every religious movement needed to have a catchy, expressive name in order to captivate the masses.<sup>72</sup> The term ‘Remonstrant’ could not be that name, as it referred to historic events with no significance for the present day.<sup>73</sup> Meyboom agreed with Hugenholtz that the transition of modernists from the Dutch Reformed Church to the Remonstrant Brotherhood should be rejected for reasons of principle: a true reformation of church life could not be effected by grafting new branches onto an old tree, but only by beginning something entirely new – that is, by creating new, free communities of faith.<sup>74</sup>

Hugenholtz’s and Meyboom’s disappointment about the loss of Dutch Reformed modernists to other denominations was shared by another group of modernists. These did not uphold the ideal of the free congregation, but the opposite ideal of the preservation of the Dutch Reformed Church as ‘*volkskerk*’. This term is hard to translate into English. Literally meaning ‘people’s church’, the *volkskerk* was an ecclesiological concept that circulated both among non-Kuyperian orthodox and among liberal members of the Dutch Reformed Church. For the former, the concept of the *volkskerk* referred to the idea that the Dutch Reformed Church was the ecclesial embodiment of the singularity of the Dutch *volk* or nation. As such, it had stamped the general cultural climate in the Netherlands and deserved to have a privileged position in Dutch society. The characteristic religious spirit of the Dutch nation was expressed in the Three Forms of Unity, on which the Dutch Reformed Church had been founded at the end of the sixteenth century. To preserve the unique character of the Dutch nation, the Dutch Reformed Church consequently had to stick to the Three Forms of Unity. For Dutch Reformed modernists, the *volkskerk* meant something else. Every Dutchman or Dutchwoman who

<sup>70</sup> Cossee, ‘De doopsgezinden en de opkomst van het modernisme in Nederland’, 230; Post, *Geschiedenis van het doopsgezinde kerklied*, 153. Hoekema and Voolstra state that the Remonstrant Brotherhood was more successful in attracting dissatisfied Reformed liberals. They suggest that this was due to the Mennonite identity, which was more pronounced than the Remonstrant one. See: A.G. Hoekema and S. Voolstra, *De doopsgezinden. Geschiedenis, geloofsleer, organisatie* (Kampen 1999), 25.

<sup>71</sup> ‘Onze leestafel’, *De Hervorming* 1878-18 (4 May 1878) 3-4, there 4; H.U. Meyboom, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1879-17 (26 April 1879), 70; [H.U. Meyboom in:] L. Mees, ‘Onze leestafel’, *Ibid.* 1881-30 (30 July 1881), 11-12. Orthodox Reformed minister H.V. Hogerzeil urged modernists to take this into account when thinking about joining the Remonstrant Brotherhood. See: Hogerzeil, *Naar de Remonstrantsche Broederschap?*, 11-21.

<sup>72</sup> “...een schok [...], die door stad werd gevoeld...” Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Naar de remonstranten?’, *De Hervorming* 1878-25 (22 June 1878), 1-2, there 1.

<sup>73</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Naar de remonstranten?’, *Ibid.* 1878-25 (22 June 1878), 1-2, there 1.

<sup>74</sup> [H.U. Meyboom in:] ‘Tiende jaarfeest van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond te Deventer gevierd’, *Ibid.* 1880-46 (13 November 1880), 181-183, there 182. Repeating this ideal a year later, Meyboom made clear to deeply regret that the NPB had not come to replace denominational church life. See: H.U. Meyboom, *De oude kerken en de nieuwe tijd* (Amsterdam 1881), 57, 66-67.

cherished the principle of freedom of conscience, the principle of which the Dutch Reformed Church was said to be the patron, should be welcome in this denomination, regardless of his specific religious convictions. In a nutshell: for some orthodox, the Dutch Reformed *volkskerk* was the church *for* the people, while for some modernists, it was the church *of* the people.<sup>75</sup> The latter argued that every modernist who left the Dutch Reformed Church – either to join another denomination or to become entirely churchless – acted reprehensibly, as he contributed to the weakening of the *volkskerk*. After all, to be the church *of* the people, the Dutch Reformed Church could not do without a large and influential modernist segment.

In reaction to the aforementioned speech that H.U. Meyboom delivered at the 1880 annual NPB meeting, minister A.J. Oort (1838-1917) gave a good example of the modernist rationale behind the idea of the *volkskerk*. Oort was not the first to defend modernists' presence in the Dutch Reformed Church – Kuenen, for example, had already done the same in his 1866 pamphlet *Het goed recht der modernen (Modernists' Perfect Right)*<sup>76</sup> –, nor was he the first modernist to express the ideal of the *volkskerk*,<sup>77</sup> but his response to Meyboom did show that a gradual alteration was beginning to take place in modernist public opinion regarding the institution of the church. Beforehand, those who believed that modernism inherently brought with it a strong plea for the creation of free congregations – whether within the Dutch Reformed Church or outside of it – were the ones who shouted loudest within the modernist movement. Yet, slowly in the 1880s and increasingly in the 1890s, they became clamoured down by modernists who wanted to preserve the existing ecclesial institutions, particularly the Dutch Reformed Church, as *volkskerk*. According to Oort, free congregations could form an administrative alliance, but such a bond would never be durable. If denominational life were to be replaced with free congregations, people who did not want to side with any faction would be forced to choose. Moreover, congregations consisting only of like-minded individuals would breed pedantry, exclusivism and consequently new conflicts. Against this rather uninviting prospect, Oort put

<sup>75</sup> H. Noordegraaf, 'Volkskerk', in: Harinck, Paul and Wallet (eds.), *Het gereformeerde geheugen*, 481-492. For an account of the differences between confessionalist and modernist interpretations of the *volkskerk*, written from an orthodox perspective, see: P.J. Kromsigt, *Tweeërlei volkskerk* (Amsterdam 1915), 4-5, 12, 21, 23-25, 31-33.

<sup>76</sup> A. Kuenen, *Het goed recht der modernen* (Leiden 1866). Kuenen's brochure was one of many in which modernists' ecclesial rights were defended, including: E.J.P. Jorissen, *De moderne theologie op den kansel veroordeeld. Eene kritiek* (Groningen 1862); *Adres aan den bijzonderen kerkeraad der Nederduitsche Herv. Gemeente te 's-Gravenhage* (The Hague 1864); W. Hoevers, *Het regt van een modernen theoloog tot de Evangeliebediening in de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk. Antwoord aan ds. J.H. Gunning jr., tevens met het oog op het adres des kerkeraad van de Ned. Herv. gemeente te 's-Gravenhage, aan de algemene synode, tegen de moderne theologie* (The Hague 1864); A. Réville, *Nous maintiendrons. Lettre au Dr. A. Pierson à l'occasion de ses adieux à sa dernière église* (Arnhem 1865); D.J. Fleischer and S.M. Posthuma, *Eene stem uit het volk, ten gunste der moderne richting en harer leeraars* (Nijmegen 1867); F.W.B. van Bell et al., *Een woord tot alle vrijzinnigen onder de leden der Nederduitsche Hervormde Gemeente te Amsterdam* (Amsterdam 1871); J. de Bosch Kemper, *Het toezicht op de Evangelieprediking door kerkbesturen. Een voordracht en voorstel in de vergadering van de synode der Evangelisch Luthersche Kerk in het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden* (Amsterdam 1872); H. Heijen, *Het recht van bestaan der modernen als kerkelijke partij. Adres aan de hoogerw. leden der synode van de Evangelisch Luthersche Kerk in ons vaderland, ter zake van de formule tot onderteekening bij de toelating der kandidaten in de theologie tot de predikdienst* (The Hague 1873); W.F. Loman, *De verloren zoon en de Evang. Luth. Synode van 1873. Brief aan ds. Ludw. C. Lentz, vice-voorzitter dier Synode en Hoogduitsch predikant te Amsterdam, naar aanleiding van zijn advies, onder den titel "Heeft de moderne richting aanspraak op kerkelijke wettiging?"* (Amsterdam 1873); R.T.H.P.L.A. van Boneval Faure, *Rechtzinnigen en modernen in eene en dezelfde kerk. Openbare brief aan prof. J.I. Doedes* (Leiden 1874).

<sup>77</sup> In 1877, for example, Dutch Reformed minister M.A. de Jongh (1843-1879) stated to prefer the Dutch Reformed Church as *volkskerk* to a disintegration of the Dutch Reformed Church along factional lines. See: M.A. de Jongh, 'Contra', *De Hervorming* 1877-43 (27 October 1877), 2-3, there 2. [Erroneously, the initials 'M.H.' are used.]



the image of the Dutch Reformed Church: it was large, it had members from all social classes, and it symbolised ‘Dutchness’.<sup>78</sup> Minister A. Carlier (1840-1906) had made a similar statement earlier that year. In contrast to autonomous congregations, a large and powerful Dutch Reformed Church was able to support congregations in need, found new congregations, spread genuine religious principles in the Netherlands and abroad, relieve the poor and even produce “works of visual and musical art” that could help people to “develop their inner lives.”<sup>79</sup> In the heat of the *Doleantie*, Carlier reiterated a belief “that a big, powerful *volkskerk* [...] is most preferable.”<sup>80</sup> Others, such as J. Knappert and C.G. Chavannes, cherished the same ideal and stated, in line with Carlier, to be glad that the Dutch Reformed synod did not give an inch to the supporters of the *Doleantie*; in the Dutch Reformed *volkskerk*, the peace and quiet should not be disturbed by intolerant zealots who proactively tried to bend things to their dogmatic will.<sup>81</sup>

Voices such as these, defending the preservation of the institution of the Dutch Reformed Church, swelled after 1886. This was a direct consequence of the *Doleantie*: the *volkskerk* was assailed by a movement that intended to destroy it, which urged those modernists who wanted to preserve it to cling to it with increased fervour. Although, as became clear some years after its eruption, the *Doleantie* did not free the Dutch Reformed Church from confessionalist thinking and did not, in the long run, put an end to orthodox attempts to chase modernists away, modernist supporters of the *volkskerk* ideal did not see any reason to aim for a dissolution of the Dutch Reformed Church after all. Even F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., a champion of the free congregation, admitted in 1888 that he had never felt compelled to actually break with the Dutch Reformed Church, as the Dutch Reformed congregation to which he had belonged “in practice already functioned as a free congregation. Members of this congregation who had convictions that differed from the majority had plenty of opportunities to satisfy their religious needs elsewhere in the immediate vicinity.” Many smaller congregations were simply not in the position to reconstitute themselves on a nondenominational basis, because they “could not do without the spiritual and material support that they received as Dutch Reformed congregations.”<sup>82</sup>

The aftermath of the *Doleantie* not only increased the amount of voices that defended the *volkskerk*, it also raised the hope among Reformed liberals that modernists could once again

<sup>78</sup> [A.J. Oort in:] ‘Tiende jaarfeest van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond te Deventer gevierd’, *Ibid.* 1880-46 (13 November 1880), 181-183, there 182.

<sup>79</sup> “...beeldende kunst en toonkunst...”; “...om het gemoedsleven te ontwikkelen...” Quoted from: A. Carlier, ‘Geen kerspelvorming’, *Ibid.* 1880-13 (27 March 1880), 51.

<sup>80</sup> “...ik geloof dat een groote, machtige volkskerk [...] het meest wenschelijke blijft!” Quoted from: A. Carlier, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Nogmaals de taak der kerk’, *Ibid.* 1886-44 (30 October 1886), 177. See also: A. Carlier, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1887-07 (12 February 1887), 27-28.

<sup>81</sup> J. Knappert, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1887-03 (15 January 1887), 11; [C.G. Chavannes in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De modernen en de kerkelijke strijd’, *Ibid.* 1887-15 (9 April 1887), 59. Knappert emphasised that the editorials in *De Hervorming* dealing with the aftermath of the *Doleantie* were not representative of the modernist faction in the Dutch Reformed Church: ‘many’ Reformed liberals, he argued, did not share Van Loenen Martinet’s hope of a permanent disintegration of the Dutch Reformed Church along factional lines. See: [J. Knappert in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Het kerkelijk vraagstuk in “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1886-46 (13 November 1886), 185.

<sup>82</sup> “...feitelijk reeds eene vrije gemeente was – de enkele andersdenkenden, die er toe behoorden, konden gemakkelijk in de onmiddellijke nabijheid die bevrediging hunner godsdienstige behoeften vinden.”; “...zeer vele zulke kleinere gemeenten in den lande noch den zedelijken steun, noch de geldelijke hulp missen konden, welke zij als Ned. Herv. Gemeente bezaten.” Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. in:] ‘Onze leestafel – “De weg waarlangs God ons leidde”’, *Ibid.* 1888-20 (19 May 1888), 80. The sermon in which Hugenholtz uttered these words was separately published as: *De weg waarlangs God ons leidde. Herinneringen uit zijn vijf-en-twintig jarige loopbaan, uitgesproken voor zijne gemeente op zondag 28 Januari 1888, te Grand Rapids, Michigan* (Grand Rapids [1888]).

make their influence felt within the Dutch Reformed Church. In the early 1890s, for the first time in years, church council elections in a small amount of congregations did indeed result in modernist victories. Those who upheld the ideal of the free congregation, such as Van Loenen Martinet and P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., could not appreciate this development, as it only further delayed the dissolution of the Dutch Reformed Church that they deemed necessary and inevitable,<sup>83</sup> but *volkskerk*-minded modernists were given a boost by it. Those electoral victories might stimulate modernists all across the country to become more involved with Dutch Reformed church life and proved that there was no urgency whatsoever for modernists to leave the Dutch Reformed Church. When, in the course of the 1890s, the orthodox who did not go along with the *Doleantie* picked up their fight against modernism with renewed fervency, the dominant reaction within modernist circles was not one of resignation or indifference, as it had been from the mid-1870s onwards, but rather of pugnacity. The polemical spirit and self-confidence of the 1860s and early 1870s gradually resurged.<sup>84</sup> The Dutch Reformed modernists who upheld the ideal of the *volkskerk* argued that non-Reformed modernists not only had no good reason not to join their ranks, as their denomination was broad enough to incorporate groups with different identities, but also felt that these *should* join their ranks, in order to enlarge the modernist bloc within the Dutch Reformed Church to such an extent that it would be forceful enough to prevent confessionalists from getting their way.<sup>85</sup> The number of journal articles written by *volkskerk*-minded liberals, in whose eyes the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam and the ‘defection’ of modernists to other denominations were monumental errors, increased every year, until finally, at the 1903 NPB meeting, the feeling “that those modernists who have left the Dutch Reformed Church have acted wrongfully and that unification instead of dispersion of Reformed liberals should be strived for” had come to dominate. B.W. Colenbrander, who is quoted here, recognised this as a significant and positive turn of modernist public opinion: “if someone would have vented this sentiment ten years ago, he would have met with fierce opposition. But at the moment, there were no protests. This proves that better convictions [regarding the institution of the church, TK] have taken root.”<sup>86</sup>

Modernist Lutherans, Remonstrants and Mennonites, of whom some had previously been Dutch Reformed themselves, were not against a strengthening of the modernist segment in the Dutch Reformed Church as such, but did not consider coalescing within the walls of this church denomination. Their right to exist as separate communities was questioned by *volkskerk*-

<sup>83</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Ons antwoord aan prof. Knappert’, *Ibid.* 1889-30 (27 July 1889), 118; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Een openingswoord’, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* XV (1892), 1-12, there 8; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland’, *De Hervorming* 1894-43 (27 October 1894), 171.

<sup>84</sup> Around 1900, a growing number of brochures were published in which modernists’ interests in the Dutch Reformed Church were defended. Examples are: C. Hille Ris Lambers, *Heeft de orthodoxie recht op de handhaving der belijdenis aan te dringen?* ([Leiden 1897]); Van Manen, *Wat nu?*; B.D. Eerdmans, *Het recht der vrijzinnigen in de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk en de zoogenaamde orthodoxie* (Leiden 1901); L. Knappert, *Overmacht of recht? Een woord tot allen, die belangstellen in de Ned. Herv. Kerk* (Leiden 1905).

<sup>85</sup> E.g.: W.C. van Manen, ‘Het fatale fragment’, *De Hervorming* 1897-46 (13 November 1897), 182; W. Zaalberg, ‘Nog eens bondsplicht’, *Ibid.* 1897-51 (18 December 1897), 201-202.

<sup>86</sup> “...dat zij die voor en na de Herv. kerk hebben verlaten, zeer verkeerd hebben gehandeld; alsook dat niet naar uiteengaan, maar naar organisatie van de vrijzinnige Hervormden gestreefd moet worden.”; “Wie dat alles voor een paar tientallen jaren geleden op eene vergadering van modernnen had durven verzekeren, zou van rechts en links tegenspraak ondervonden hebben. En nu? er kwam volstrekt geen tegenspraak. Een bewijs hoe de betere opvattingen al zijn doorgedrongen.” Quoted from: Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *Ibid.* 1903-05 (31 January 1903), 35-36, there 36.

minded Reformed modernists, but their self-awareness was bigger than a couple of decades before. The influx of liberals from the Dutch Reformed Church had contributed to this in two ways. First, it had fed the sentiment among non-Reformed modernists that the existence of their communities of faith was both legitimate and necessary. In the first half of the nineteenth century, prior to the emergence of the modernist movement, the number of Remonstrants and Mennonites had reached a historic low,<sup>87</sup> which had had dramatic repercussions on their self-image. In 1834, for example, Remonstrant theologian A. des Amorie van der Hoeven (1798-1855) had implied a hope for a reunification of the Remonstrant Brotherhood with the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>88</sup> Around 1900, however, such a sentiment had become archaic:<sup>89</sup> the number of Remonstrants had quadrupled in the second half of the nineteenth century from approximately 3,000 to 12,000.<sup>90</sup> Instead of hoping to be accepted in the Dutch Reformed Church and consequently to dissolve their own church denomination, Remonstrants now self-confidently claimed that all true Protestants could only feel truly at home in their Brotherhood.<sup>91</sup>

Second, those who had been ‘converts’ from the Dutch Reformed Church were not inclined to go back to the denomination they had left, and defended their ‘conversion’ by sharply contrasting the qualities of their new ecclesial home with the deficiencies of their old one. As early as 1879, Meyboom had noticed with a mixture of amazement and disapproval that new, formerly Dutch Reformed Remonstrants were the most militant defendants of the Remonstrant Brotherhood.<sup>92</sup> To advocates of the *volkskerk*, Remonstrants and Mennonites replied that whereas modernists had to constantly beat off orthodox attacks in the Dutch Reformed Church, their own congregations were oases of liberality.<sup>93</sup> And to supporters of free congregations, Remonstrants in particular called out that the ideal of the free congregation was already realised in their own denominations.<sup>94</sup> Self-assuredly, they objected to anyone who questioned their right to exist.

<sup>87</sup> J. van Eijnatten, *Liberty and Concord in the United Provinces. Religious Toleration and the Public in the Eighteenth-Century Netherlands* (Leiden and Boston 2003), 23.

<sup>88</sup> E.H. Cossee, *Abraham des Amorie van der Hoeven 1798-1855. Een remonstrants theoloog in de Biedermeiertijd* (Kampen 1988), 101-102.

<sup>89</sup> L. Knappert, ‘De historische verklaring der gehechtheid aan eigen kerkgenootschap’, *Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift* XV (1926), 181-195, there 192.

<sup>90</sup> Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 110.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 235. The influx of Reformed liberals changed the position of the Remonstrant Brotherhood vis-à-vis the Dutch Reformed Church. New members were taught what was so specific about the Brotherhood, e.g. in: J.H. Maronier, *Wat willen deremonstranten? Toespraak, gehouden in de Remonstrantsche Vereeniging te Doesborgh den 18 November 1877* (Doesburg 1877); C.P. Tiele and L.H. Slotemaker, *Toespraken, gehouden bij de inwijding der Remonstrantsche Gemeente te Arnhem, op Zondag 7 April 1878* (Arnhem 1878); C.P. Tiele and B.C.J. Mosselmans, *Toespraken, gehouden bij de inwijding der Remonstrantsche Gemeente te Groningen, op Zondag 28 Juli 1878* (Groningen 1878).

<sup>92</sup> H.U. Meyboom, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1879-15 (12 April 1879), 62.

<sup>93</sup> E.g.: C., ‘Binnenland – Uit de Doopsgezinde Broederschap’, *De Hervorming* 1879-39 (27 September 1879), 155; 1879-40 (4 October 1879), 158-159, there 159; [C.P. Tiele in:] ‘De kerkelijke strijd te Amsterdam’, *Ibid.* 1886-20 (15 May 1886), 77-78, there 78; ‘Binnenland – Uit een correspondentie’, *Ibid.* 1890-31 (2 August 1890), 122; H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Een nieuwe Remonstrantsche Gemeente’, *Ibid.* 1897-42 (16 October 1897), 167-168, there 168; B. Tideman Jz., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1897-44 (30 October 1897), 175; [S. Cramer in:] J.N. Wiersma, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Onderafdeelingen van den bond’, *Ibid.* 1903-42 (17 October 1903), 334; Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 153.

<sup>94</sup> E.g.: L.H. Slotemaker and B.C.J. Mosselmans, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1879-14 (5 April 1879), 58; Cossee, ‘De doopsgezinden en de opkomst van het modernisme in Nederland’, 237; Cossee, ‘De stichting van de Vrije Gemeente’, 112-113; Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 147-151.

#### 4. Ecclesial Competition and Introversion

The *volkskerk*-mindedness that became dominant in Reformed modernist public opinion on the one hand, and the reinvigorated awareness of non-Reformed modernists on the other, had severe consequences for both the interrelationships within the modernist movement and the willingness to structurally reform existing church life. Whereas in the 1860s and 1870s, modernists had generally acknowledged the necessity of interdenominational collaboration and some had even hoped that denominational boundaries would ultimately fade away, they now began to stress their singularity and to see each other as competitors. The existing ecclesial dividedness of modernists was no longer seen as an artefact with a mere historical significance; instead, modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church, the Lutheran Church, the Remonstrant Brotherhood and the Mennonite Society all called history to witness in order to substantiate their claim that their church group came closest to the ideal Protestant community of faith. They looked at each other rather suspiciously, trying to reinforce their own ranks.

There was not only a competitive ‘battle’ going on among the different modernist church groups, but also between these groups and the NPB. Dutch Reformed modernists complained that the NPB had facilitated transitions from the Dutch Reformed Church to other denominations. One of them, for example, stated in retrospect in 1914 that battle-weary fellow church members had only been able to make the transition to the Remonstrant Brotherhood “because the NPB had served as their footbridge.”<sup>95</sup> In Arnhem, Meppel, Hoogeveen, Dordrecht and Vlaardingen, between 1879 and 1908, local NPB branches had indeed played a role in the founding of new Remonstrant congregations by dissatisfied Reformed modernists.<sup>96</sup> For a significant amount of Dutch Reformed modernists, the NPB had also been the springboard to the Mennonite Society in the Zeeland town of Goes in 1889.<sup>97</sup> It therefore became subject to increasing criticism. There was another reason for Dutch Reformed modernists to be displeased with the NPB. More and more NPB branches had taken church-like characteristics: they had begun to offer religious services and to appoint ministers. Dissatisfaction about this trend also manifested itself in non-Reformed circles. The NPB was accused of depriving denominations of potential new members: by functioning as a ‘church’, it did not stimulate people who were said to ‘belong’, based on their descent, to a particular denomination, to actually join that denomination.<sup>98</sup> Moreover, a sentiment that had been latent within parts of the non-Reformed segment of the modernist movement in the first decades after the founding of the NPB now become manifest: some Remonstrants, Mennonites and Lutherans felt that the NPB primarily existed for the benefit of Dutch Reformed modernists. As Mennonite theologian S. Cramer (1842-1913), using the pen name ‘A. van Buijten’,<sup>99</sup> straightforwardly put it in *De Hervorming* in 1903: “we, dissenters

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<sup>95</sup> “...vrijzinnige hervormde mensen, welke over het bruggetje van den Prot. Bond in de Remonstrantsche Broederschap [zijn] overgelopen...” Quoted from: D. Mulder, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Nog meer vragen’, *De Hervorming* 1914-01 (3 January 1914), 7. Similar accusations are made in: [O. Genouy in:] G.A. Hoevers, ‘Berichten en mededeelingen – De Protestantenbond en de Ned. Herv. Kerk’, *Ibid.* 1914-25 (20 June 1914), 216; K.A. Beversluis, *Samen bouwen. Korte schets van de ontwikkeling en arbeid der organisatie van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Nederland* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 8; Niemeijer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XV, 7.

<sup>96</sup> Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 58, 64, 134, 281.

<sup>97</sup> Ph.M. van der Mandere, ‘Uit Goes’, *De Hervorming* 1889-50 (14 December 1889), 201.

<sup>98</sup> Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 53-54.

<sup>99</sup> W.J. Kühler, ‘Levensbericht van dr. S. Cramer’, in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1912-1913* III (Leiden 1913), 71-101, there 99.

[Remonstrants, Mennonites and Lutherans, TK], do not really need the NPB.” He explained that the *raison d’être* for many NPB branches was not so much to simplify cross-denominational contacts, but rather to provide shelter to modernists who were confronted with severe orthodox hostility in their home congregations, by offering an alternative to local church life. In most instances, non-Reformed modernists were not hindered in the profession of their liberal beliefs and therefore did not have to find ‘shelter’. Cramer suggested that *dissenters* had only joined the NPB in the past to express their sympathy for modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church, whose position was more precarious than their own. However, now that the latter openly began to doubt their right to exist as separate communities of faith, they could lose their motivation to exert themselves for the NPB.<sup>100</sup>

Because of the discontentment with the NPB that intensified both within Reformed and non-Reformed modernist circles, the ideal of the NPB as the community of faith in which all modernists would ultimately unite definitively faded away. The NPB wanted to promote the general interests of the entire modernist community, but now that many of its branches had developed into nondenominational church-like congregations, doubts were raised whether it could still fulfil this objective. Since they had come to see NPB branches as competitors that hindered them from reinforcing themselves, church groups felt that there was a conflict of interest between the association and themselves. They were no longer willing to just accept the central role of the NPB within the modernist movement.<sup>101</sup> In the first decades of the twentieth century, *De Hervorming* was consequently full of articles in which the relationship of the NPB vis-à-vis denominational groups of modernists was discussed.

The aforementioned ‘ecclesial turn’ did not only give the *coup de grâce* to some modernists’ dream that the NPB would come to replace church life; it also entailed a reappraisal of church practices. Fuelled by a general trend in society that replaced individualism and intellectualism with communality and emotions as well as by the rise of right-wing modernists, criticism against modernist congregational life grew. Modernist services, hymns and sermons were said to be too intellectualistic, not appealing to emotions.<sup>102</sup> There was a call for interlarding

<sup>100</sup> “*Voor ons toch, dissenters, is die bond eigenlijk niet nodig.*” Quoted from: A. van Buijten [S. Cramer], ‘De vrijzinnige hervormden en de vrijzinnige dissenters’, *De Hervorming* 1903-08 (21 February 1903), 58-59, there 59. See also: ‘Binnenland – De algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1889-43 (26 October 1889), 171; S. de Waard, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Protesten’, *Ibid.* 1895-46 (16 November 1895), 183-184, there 184; A. Gerritsma, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Protesten’, *Ibid.* 1895-47 (23 November 1895), 187-188, there 187; J. Herman de Ridder, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Protesten’, *Ibid.* 1895-48 (30 November 1895), 191-192, there 191. Afterwards, such sentiments only increased. See, e.g.: F. Kleyn, ‘Rondom de kerk – De Nederl. Protestantenvbond en onze Broederschap’, *Uit de Remonstrantsche Broederschap* XXXVIII (1926/1927), 103-109; F. Kleyn, ‘Rondom de kerk – Nog eens: Onze Broederschap en de Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond’, *Ibid.* XXXVIII (1926/1927), 172-179; Hoenderdaal, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen’, 273. In 1940, Remonstrant minister N. Blokker noticed that the relationship between the Remonstrant Brotherhood and the NPB had become tense in the preceding decades, particularly due to the development of NPB branches into church-like congregations. See: N. Blokker, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De verhouding van Remonstrantsche Broederschap en Nederl. Protestantenvbond’, *Levensrichting* V.4 (April 1940), 8-17.

<sup>101</sup> Exemplary in this respect is Groenewegen’s remark at the 1914 general meeting of the Remonstrant Brotherhood that “the NPB cannot and ought not to put itself on a par with grand, historical institutions of religious community life such as the churches.” (“*De Protestantenvbond kan en mag zich niet op één lijn stellen met groote, historische instellingen van godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven als de kerkgenootschappen.*”) Quoted from: [H.Y. Groenewegen in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Remonstrantsche Broederschap’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXI.146 (27 May 1914), evening paper D, 1.

<sup>102</sup> Een trouw kerkbezoeker, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Waaraan is de verslapping van het vrijzinnig godsdienstig leven te wijten?’, *De Hervorming* 1906-46 (17 November 1906), 365-366, there 365; G.A. Hoevers, ‘Over eeredienst’, *Ibid.*

the liturgy with more symbolism and for paying more attention to the ‘mysterious’ side of faith, a call that did not leave the NPB unaffected. At the request of some of their members, more and more branches decided to optionally offer baptismal services and Lord’s Supper ceremonies.<sup>103</sup> Within the Remonstrant Brotherhood, some congregations of which had abolished one or both of these sacraments in the late nineteenth century, a similar development occurred.<sup>104</sup> The ‘ecclesial turn’ was reflected in hymnological developments as well. To the dissatisfaction of a growing number of modernists, the NPB hymnbook, first issued in 1882, was pervaded with a spirit of rationalism, optimism and triumphalism.<sup>105</sup> The NPB decided to give in to these modernists by publishing a new hymnbook in 1920, which contained more psalms, more early-nineteenth-century hymns and more songs with lyrics that sounded rather traditional and orthodox than its predecessor.<sup>106</sup> Thus, as these examples indicate, instead of experimenting with structure, liturgy, language and symbols, the modernist movement fell back on traditional customs. Eventually, even in the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, which had once prided itself for its reformist spirit, the initial ‘radicalism’ tempered; “the bourgeois optimism, candidly disregarding the classic ecclesial tradition,” D. Drijver wrote in *De Hervorming* in 1927, “no longer sets the tone in the Free Congregation. [...] Time has also taught that the old Bible cannot be replaced by the Bible of mankind without going at the expense [of congregational life].”<sup>107</sup>

The reappraisal of the institution of the church and ecclesial traditions also found expression in modernist architecture. The oldest buildings that were built to house NPB branches, constructed in the 1880s and 1890s,<sup>108</sup> reflected the then dominant conviction in the modernist movement that the exterior of a building could never turn a religious service into a ‘sacralised’ event, but rather that only the religious service itself could create a ‘sacred’ atmosphere.<sup>109</sup> In 1882, for example, the NPB in Varsseveld had erected a simple place of assembly that was held up in *Nieuw Leven* in 1895 as an example to all branches that wanted to create buildings of their

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1913-03 (18 January 1913), 18-19; J.J. Bleeker, ‘Niemand weet het’, *Ibid.* 1914-20 (16 May 1914), 170-171; Eene getrouwe kerkbezoekster, ‘Redactioneel – Het kerkbezoek’, *Ibid.* 1914-22 (30 May 1914), 189-190; H. Vrendenberg Cz., ‘Hoofdartikelen – “Gij leest mijnen tekst...”’, *Ibid.* 1917-07 (17 February 1917), 54-55, there 55; K.F. Proost, ‘Kunst en letteren – Kunst in onze godsdienst oefeningen’, *Ibid.* 1919-11 (15 March 1919), 42; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De symboliek in de protestantsche eeredienst’, *Ibid.* 1921-28 (16 July 1921), 222.

<sup>103</sup> In 1946, N.A. Bruining could therefore conclude that within the NPB, “everything is done in a more ecclesial style than several decades ago.” (“...alles veel meer in kerkelijke stijl geschiedt dan eenige tientallen jaren geleden.”) Quoted from: N.A. Bruining, ‘Mej.dr. N.A. Bruining schrijft’, *Bondsnieuws* V.10 (2 May 1946), 2.

<sup>104</sup> E.J. Kuiper, ‘In het krachtenveld van beschaving en godsdienst. De periode van het modernisme (1850-1920)’, in: G.J. Hoenderdaal and P.M. Luca (eds.), *Staat in de vrijheid. De geschiedenis van de remonstranten* (Zutphen 1982), 107-142, there 136; Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 361-368; J. van Zuthem, *Harde grond. Kerkelijke verhoudingen in Groningen, 1813-1945* (Assen 2012), 142.

<sup>105</sup> E.g.: H. Bakels, ‘Gemeenten die de psalmen hebben afgeschaft’, *De Hervorming* 1908-25 (20 June 1908), 194-195; 1908-26 (27 June 1908), 203; 1908-27 (4 July 1908), 212-213; L. Knappert, ‘Het psalmboek en de moderneren’, *Ibid.* 1908-28 (11 July 1908), 219; F. Dijkema, ‘De gemeente en het psalmboek’, *Ibid.* 1908-29 (18 July 1908), 227-228; J.A. Böhringer, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Oproeping tot medewerking aan den vervolgbundel van de godsdienstige liederen van den Protestantenvbond’, *Ibid.* 1909-03 (16 January 1909), 17; P.F. van Slijpe, ‘Ingezonden – Onze godsdienstige liederen’, *Ibid.* 1915-24 (12 June 1915), 211; H.A. van Bakel, ‘Bondsleven – Vervolgbundel’, *Ibid.* 1920-38 (25 September 1920), 150-151. See also: Le Coq, *Wat vlied’ of bezwijk*, 127-131.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 143-151.

<sup>107</sup> “Het burgerlijk optimisme, dat [...] vrijmoedig de klassieke traditie der kerk voorbijziet [...], geeft, onderstellen wij, in de Vrije Gemeente niet meer den toon aan. [...] Ook heeft de tijd geleerd dat de oude Bijbel niet zonder verlies te vervangen is door den Bijbel der Menschheid.” Quoted from: [A.E.F. Junod], ‘Binnenland – Een gouden feest’, *De Hervorming* 1927-12 (3 December 1927), 91-92, there 92.

<sup>108</sup> Beforehand, NPB branches used existing buildings as their venues.

<sup>109</sup> This conviction was explicitly put forward in: J. Key, ‘Offervaardigheid’, *Ibid.* 1884-28 (12 July 1884), 111.

own: in Varsseveld, the NPB “had not wasted thousands of guilders on beautiful buildings, but had instead built an adequate and convenient meeting-place that could be heated during the winter.”<sup>110</sup> In the early decades of the twentieth century, however, public opinion changed. It came to be acknowledged that buildings used for religious purposes should be constructed in such a way that they aroused ‘devotional’ feelings in people.<sup>111</sup> Those erected in the nineteenth century were said to be too ‘spiritually poor’, as were the services held inside them.<sup>112</sup> An attractive, majestic building could not only help to increase the devotion of those who already had a religious faith, it could also invite people who would have otherwise walked past it to take a look inside.<sup>113</sup> As visual manifestations of the invisible spiritual realm, places of worship should ideally fill people with awe for the divine. Buildings such as the one in Varsseveld, which had once been praised for their simplicity, therefore fell into disfavour. In 1925, Remonstrant minister R. Miedema (1886-1954) inveighed bitterly against them and blamed an older generation of modernists for underestimating the power artistic imagination could have:

In our circles, it has long been neglected that architecture is the form of art that is most important for our religious life, that the place of religious gatherings in itself can have a tremendous influence on the development of a religious community. Many of us still do not realise this. One only has to look at the NPB buildings [...] that have been erected in our country in the nineteenth century. A lack of financial resources when they were built may not serve as an extenuation of the characterlessness of these buildings, of their hideous gymnastics hall-like appearance, of the horrible lack of taste or bad taste that oftentimes characterises them, of their lack of sacredness and of their lack of a religious atmosphere. Rather, it should be recognised that [NPB buildings] were intended to have no sacred character at all and were meant to be nothing more than meeting-places, or that modernists in those days did not understand that a place of worship should be a work of art in the sense that its exterior should reflect the principles of the faith community that makes use of it.

Miedema admitted that someone’s personal faith did not depend on external influences, but he did believe that the chronic “lack of solidarity” that he descried in modernist circles was in large part a consequence of the absence of buildings that were expressions of an artistic sense and a community spirit.<sup>114</sup> Although his words seemed to be an exhortation, in fact Miedema

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<sup>110</sup> “Men heeft geen duizenden verspild aan prachtige gebouwen, maar een voldoende, ’s winters verwarmd en gezellig lokaal gesticht...” Quoted from: ‘Binnenland – IJver met verstand’, *Ibid.* 1895-03 (19 January 1895), 10.

<sup>111</sup> G.A. Hoevers, ‘Over eeredienst’, *Ibid.* 1913-03 (18 January 1913), 18-19, there 19; P.B., ‘Ingezonden – Vormen?’, *Ibid.* 1916-18 (29 April 1916), 150-151; J. Doets Jzn., ‘Kerkelijk leven – Bouwen als uiting van innerlijke ervaring’, *De Stroom* V.30 (3 July 1926), 2; C.E. Hooykaas, ‘In den stroom – Kerkbouw in onze beweging’, *Ibid.* VI.2 (18 December 1926), 2.

<sup>112</sup> A.C. van Daalen, ‘Ingezonden – De bevordering van het kerkgaan’, *De Hervorming* 1914-15 (11 April 1914), 130; K.F. Proost, ‘Kunst en letteren – Kunst in onze godsdiensttoefeningen’, *Ibid.* 1919-10 (8 March 1919), 38.

<sup>113</sup> P.B., ‘Ingezonden – Vormen?’, *Ibid.* 1916-18 (29 April 1916), 150-151; Fraternitus, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Bedehuis of vergaderlokaal’, *Ibid.* 1921-30 (30 July 1921), 236-238; L.J. van Holk, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Godsdienst als heilighedsbesef’, *Ibid.* 1921-43 (29 October 1921), 341-342; 1921-44 (5 November 1921), 348-350; H.T. de Graaf, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Heilighedsbesef in het broederschapshuis’, *Ibid.* 1921-49 (10 December 1921), 388-390.

<sup>114</sup> “Dat de bouwkunst juist voor ons godsdienstig leven verreweg de belangrijkste van alle kunstvormen is; dat de wijze waarop de plaats van godsdienstig samenzijn is ingericht van ingrijpenden invloed kan zijn op de ontwikkeling van de godsdienstige gemeenschap, heeft men ook in onze kringen langen tijd niet beseft, en velen beseffen het nog niet. Men zie daarvoor slechts naar de talrijke Protestantenvondgebouwtjes [...], die in de 19<sup>e</sup> eeuw in ons land verzezen zijn. Laat men hun karakterloosheid, hun akelig gymnastieklokaalcachet, hun dikwijls gruwelijke smakeloosheid en wansmaak, hun gebrek aan wijding, aan geestelijke atmosfeer, niet schuiven op een tekort aan geldmiddelen bij den bouw, doch laat men ruiterlijk erkennen dat men òf met opzet de wijding heeft willen bannen en

merely voiced what had become mainstream opinion, which is clearly reflected by the difference between NPB buildings erected before and after 1900: the latter looked like churches, from both the outside and from the inside.<sup>115</sup>

The ‘ecclesial turn’ also meant that modernist church groups began to focus more on the strengthening of their own ranks instead of on the strengthening of the modernist movement as a whole. In Dutch Reformed circles, this denominational introversion resulted in the founding of the *Evangelische Unie* (Gospel Union) in 1896. The roots of the *Evangelische Unie* can be traced back to an 1896 article, in which B.W. Colenbrander, one of the founding fathers of the NPB, substantiated that since confessionalists were once again trying to gain absolute power in the Dutch Reformed Church, a commission for the protection of modernist interests was needed.<sup>116</sup> Colenbrander urged to establish such a commission within the framework of the NPB, but minister J.A. Bruins, Sr. (1845-1915) disagreed that the NPB was the obvious body to combat the revitalised confessionalism within the Dutch Reformed Church. As Bruins explained, the NPB was an organisation of modernists, whereas not all non-confessionalists in the Dutch Reformed Church belonged to the modernist movement. Moreover, although counterattacking confessionalism had been its spearhead in the past, the NPB currently devoted more attention to its sphere of activity outside of church life. Therefore, Bruins argued that an entirely new organisation, not embedded within the NPB, had to be founded.<sup>117</sup> Colenbrander was convinced by Bruins, and others gave their approval to Bruins’s suggestion as well, leading to the provisional establishment of the *Evangelische Unie* on 18 November 1896. According to its articles of association, the *Evangelische Unie*, constituted on 20 May 1897, was “an organisation of members of the Dutch Reformed Church who want to maintain the Protestant principle of the freedom of individual Christian faith within this denomination” and tried to “defend and expand the ecclesial rights of its members” by, among other things, “taking part in church council elections and arranging meetings to discuss ecclesiastical affairs.”<sup>118</sup> By being founded on the Gospel, without specifying how the Gospel should be interpreted, the *Evangelische Unie* hoped to be broad enough to unite modernists, *evangelischen* and possibly even the moderately orthodox *ethischen*. Among the most dedicated

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*de bedoeling was een vergaderzaal te stichten zonder meer, of er niet aan gedacht heeft dat de plaats van godsdienstig samenzijn een kunstwerk moet zijn in dien zin, dat zich in den bouw de grondbeginselen van den kring, dien zij omsluit, weerspiegelen.”* Quoted from: R. Miedema, ‘Godsdienst en bouwkunst’, *Ibid.* 1925-25 (20 June 1925), 196.

<sup>115</sup> J.J. Meyer agreed with Miedema. He felt that all liberal Protestant places of worship built in the nineteenth century were of little significance. He attributed the changed views on architectural aesthetics to “consciousness-raising and deeper reflection in liberal Protestantism.” (“...diepere bewustwording en bezinning van het vrijzinnig protestantisme.”) See: J.J. Meyer, *Kerk en kerkgaan XVI. De kerkbouw* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 5-6. The quote is on p. 6. See also: J. Ellerbroek, *Kerk en kerkgaan XVIII. Kerkbezoek* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 8. Increased interest in architectural aesthetics with regard to church buildings in liberal Protestant circles found expression in two conferences that were held in 1928 and 1929. See: J. Gratama et al., *Religie en bouwkunst* (Huis ter Heide 1928); R. Miedema (ed.), *Religie en bouwkunst. Verhandelingen van het 2<sup>e</sup> Congres voor Religie en Bouwkunst, gehouden op 10 en 11 Juli 1929 in het Oolgaardhuis te Arnhem* (Huis ter Heide 1929).

<sup>116</sup> B.W. Colenbrander, ‘Binnenland – Bescheiden vragen’, *De Hervorming* 1896-27 (4 July 1896), 107.

<sup>117</sup> J.A. Bruins, Sr., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1896-28 (11 July 1896), 112. See also: Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 41.

<sup>118</sup> “...eene vereeniging van lidmaten en leden der Ned. Herv. Kerk, die het protestantsch beginsel van vrijheid van persoonlijk Christelijke belijdenis in dit kerkgenootschap willen handhaven.”; “...de kerkelijke rechten van hare leden te verdedigen [...], uitbreiding van deze rechten te bevorderen...”; “...door een werkzaam optreden bij de kerkelijke verkiezingen, door het houden van bijeenkomsten, waarin kerkelijke vraagstukken worden behandeld.” Quoted from: ‘Binnenland – De Evangelische Unie’, *De Hervorming* 1897-10 (6 March 1897), 39.



NPB members, such as J. van Loenen Martinet, there was no sympathy for this initiative: the *Evangelische Unie* tried to do, the NPB could have done as well.<sup>119</sup> Besides, to meet the wishes of such men as Colenbrander and Bruins, a commission exclusively devoted to the promotion of the interests of Dutch Reformed modernists had been founded during the 1896 NPB meeting, just two weeks before the *Evangelische Unie* came into existence. Yet, those involved with the latter thought that the founding of such a commission within the NPB was not sufficient.<sup>120</sup> As W. Schuurman (1837-1909) and B.D. Eerdmans, board members of the *Evangelische Unie*, further argued, the NPB was still permeated with a sentiment that the Dutch Reformed Church should be dissolved, whereas, on the contrary, everything should be done to keep a broad-based *volkskerk* intact.<sup>121</sup> “it will be disastrous for our nation if all non-confessionalist currents are removed from [the Dutch Reformed Church].”<sup>122</sup> Although the *Evangelische Unie* could not prevent hundreds of Reformed modernists from founding a Remonstrant congregation in Dordrecht in 1897 and from resigning their church membership in Beilen in 1903, Colenbrander, writing under the pseudonym ‘Cyriacus’, implied that the motivation behind its founding still existed: after all, as far as combatting confessionalism was concerned, the NPB “has proven to be superfluous for the smaller church denominations and to be unable to contribute to reforms in the Dutch Reformed Church.”<sup>123</sup>

The smaller church denominations to which Colenbrander referred also took initiatives to strengthen their own position, as a result of their increased self-esteem and growing uneasiness with tendencies of ‘churchification’ within the NPB. As to that, the contrast between the period before and after the turn of the century was strongest in Remonstrant circles. Prior to 1895, the official policy of the Remonstrant Brotherhood had been to abstain from attracting new members, in the hope that the Brotherhood could reintegrate into the Dutch Reformed Church. Modernists who belonged to this last denomination and wanted to join its ranks were welcome, but the Brotherhood did not proactively try to expand itself. In municipalities where it had no congregation, it did not assist its members and even advised these to go over to other church denominations.<sup>124</sup> However, beginning around 1900 and increasing after the founding of the Commission for Dispersed Remonstrants in 1907, the Brotherhood came to see as its duty the preservation of its scattered members for the Remonstrant community. Therefore, the creation of ‘*kringen*’ (‘circles’) of dispersed Remonstrants was strongly, albeit not unanimously, stimulated, ideally leading to the founding of new congregations. Even in towns in which a non-Remonstrant liberal congregation or NPB branch was located, efforts were made to organise Remonstrants

<sup>119</sup> E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De Evangelische Unie’, *Ibid.* 1897-10 (6 March 1897), 39; 1897-12 (20 March 1897), 46-47, there 47; 1897-13 (27 March 1897), 50; 1897-14 (3 April 1897), 55. See also: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 55-56.

<sup>120</sup> A fear that, in the eyes of those involved with the *Evangelische Unie*, proved to be true. See: Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *De Hervorming* 1902-21 (24 May 1902), 162-163, there 163. See also: Van Driel, ‘Eenheid over alle scheidsmuuren heen’, 53.

<sup>121</sup> B.W. Colenbrander expressed himself in similar terms in: Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *De Hervorming* 1902-39 (27 September 1902), 308.

<sup>122</sup> “...dat het een onoverkomelijke ramp zou zijn voor ons volk, indien daaruit verwijderd werden alle richtingen, die niet confessioneel mogen heeten.” Quoted from: W. Schuurman and B.D. Eerdmans, ‘Binnenland – Van de Evangelische Unie’, *Ibid.* 1897-15 (10 April 1897), 59.

<sup>123</sup> “...is gebleken voor de kleinere genootschappen geheel overbodig, en voor de Ned. Herv. Kerk volslagen onvermogen tot hervorming te zijn.” Quoted from: Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *Ibid.* 1902-41 (11 October 1902), 324-325, there 324.

<sup>124</sup> Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 29, 159.

as a separate group.<sup>125</sup> In some cases, this meant that existing local forms of liberal Protestant cooperation came under pressure. The growth of the Remonstrant Brotherhood was apparently more important than the advancement of modernist, and hence religious, life in general, opponents of separate Remonstrant group formation scornfully said. One of the latter, S.K. Bakker, ironically but sincerely asked H.Y. Groenewegen, the most convinced advocate of Remonstrant expansion, what the distinctiveness of ‘preaching the Gospel in a Remonstrant way’ actually was,<sup>126</sup> thereby denouncing the “extremely worrying” phenomenon of denominationalism that manifested itself throughout the entire modernist movement.<sup>127</sup>

Indeed, the formation of separate ‘circles’ was not limited to the Remonstrant community; Mennonites were just as active in hammering away at denominational loyalty. Unlike Remonstrants, Mennonites, who characterised themselves as having a liberal attitude, but who did not all identify as modernists,<sup>128</sup> had always been rather keen on preserving their distinctiveness, symbolised by their practice of believer’s baptism. This distinctiveness, however, came to be stressed with more intensity around 1900. Mennonites were encouraged not to let cooperation with others go at the expense of their own identity. This found expression in the endeavour to create Mennonite ‘circles’ in places where the Mennonite community was too small to have its own congregation and needed to attend congregations belonging to other denominations.<sup>129</sup> Another manifestation thereof was the increased activity of the *Vereeniging betreffende de Doopsgezinden in de verstrooiing* (Association for Dispersed Mennonites). This organisation, founded in 1866, tried to involve scattered Mennonites more actively in the Mennonite community as a whole, by publishing a series of tracts as of 1897.<sup>130</sup> Just as in other denominations, the unifying role the NPB wanted to play within the modernist movement became more and more problematic among Mennonites, since the latter began to focus more strongly on their own interests, which did not necessarily coincide with those of the NPB. In 1903, Mennonite minister S.D.A. Wartena (1871-1953) explained that it was important for the modernist movement to have a large representation in the Dutch Reformed Church as the nation’s largest denomination and that non-Reformed modernists therefore loyally worked together with their Reformed counterparts

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 280-296.

<sup>126</sup> S.K. Bakker, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1911-05 (4 February 1911), 38.

<sup>127</sup> “...buitengewoon bedenkelijk [sic]...” Quoted from: S.K. Bakker, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Een nieuwe Remonstrantsche Gemeente’, *Ibid.* 1911-07 (18 February 1911), 53.

<sup>128</sup> N. van der Zijpp, *Geschiedenis der Doopsgezinden in Nederland* (Arnhem 1952), 218; A. Voolstra and P. Visser, ‘Macht van een minderheid. De geschiedenis van de doopsgezinden in Nederland 1530-2000’, in: F. Stark and E.J. Tillema (eds.), *Kracht van een minderheid. Doopsgezinden in Nederland* (Zoetermeer 2011), 19-47, there 39.

<sup>129</sup> For example in Assen. See: P. Brood, ‘In volle ontplooiing. Assen tussen circa 1807 en 1920’, in: H. Gras et al. (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Assen* (Assen 2000), 148-275, there 255.

<sup>130</sup> The first of these tracts was titled ‘*Het ontstaan onzer broederschap*’ (‘*The Origin of our Brotherhood*’) and clearly meant to stress the uniqueness of the Mennonite community in order to incite dispersed Mennonites not to give up their loyalty to it. See: S. de Waard, *Geschriftjes ten behoeve van de Doopsgezinden in de verstrooiing* I. *Het ontstaan onzer broederschap* (s.l. 1897). See also: F.C. Fleischer, *De Doopsgezinden* (Baarn 1909), 35-36. In this same series, P.B. Westerdijk published a brochure in which he justified the endeavour to make sure that Mennonites living in places without a Mennonite community would not become members of another church denomination. “In our firm belief,” he wrote, “Mennonite congregational life is the form in which Christian life comes out best.” (“*Naar onze overtuiging bezitten wij in ons doopsgezind gemeentelven den vorm, waarin [het] christelijk leven het best tot zijn recht kan komen.*”) Yet, he did not make clear exactly what the peculiarities of Mennonite congregational life in comparison to congregational life in other church denominations were; he said only that the former was different from the latter due to ‘history’ and ‘tradition’. See: P.B. Westerdijk, *Geschriftjes ten behoeve van de Doopsgezinden in de verstrooiing* XVI. *Het recht van ons bestaan* (s.l. 1902). The quote is on p. 16.

within the frame of the NPB. Yet, at the same time, there had always been a latent fear among Mennonites that Reformed modernists played first fiddle in the NPB.<sup>131</sup> The increased zeal with which Reformed modernists tried to strengthen their position, both within and outside of the NPB, fueled this sentiment.

Liberal Lutherans acted in the same way as Remonstrants and Mennonites, albeit for different reasons. Because their orthodox fellow church members had managed to gain more power and their ranks had been thinned out due to lapsed churchgoers, liberal Lutherans felt the need to organise themselves in a more enduring way, ultimately resulting in the founding of the *Algemeene Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Lutherschen* (General Association of Liberal Lutherans) in 1913.<sup>132</sup>

In the meantime, it had turned out that the *Evangelische Unie* had not managed to meet the initial expectations of its founders. The moderately orthodox *ethischen* had kept themselves apart from it. Moreover, with some notable exceptions, such as the towns of Tiel in Gelderland and Brielle in South Holland, the *Evangelische Unie* had managed to gain a firm footing only in North Holland. This may seem odd at first, since modernists had a relatively strong position in Dutch Reformed church life in that province. The need for NPB branches had therefore never really been felt there. The presence of the *Evangelische Unie* in North Holland had to do with the fact that most of its leaders had a link to this province, such as B.D. Eerdmans, minister in Midwoud, J.T. Tenthoff (1847-1916), minister in Hoorn, A.G. Boon (1835-1908), minister in Enkhuizen,<sup>133</sup> C. Hille Ris Lambers, minister in Venhuizen, and H.Ph. de Kanter, a liberal politician who lived in Haarlem at the time.<sup>134</sup> These men were probably afraid that the reinforced and well-organised attempts of confessionalists to seize supreme power over the entire Dutch Reformed Church could become a threat to one of the last bulwarks of Dutch Reformed liberalism. This reveals that the *Evangelische Unie* had a defensive character, which was intensified by its heterogeneous composition. Modernists and *evangelischen* were united in their anti-confessionalism, but had different ideas regarding faith- and church-related issues, as a result of which the *Evangelische Unie* did not declare itself in favour of structural reforms of the Dutch Reformed Church. Because the NPB commission for Dutch Reformed modernists lingered, the desire to organise Reformed liberals in a different way surged up.

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<sup>131</sup> S.D.A. Wartena, 'Ingezonden stukken – Onderafdeelingen van den bond', *De Hervorming* 1903-43 (24 October 1903), 342. See also: S. de Waard, 'Ingezonden stukken – Protesten', *Ibid.* 1895-46 (16 November 1895), 183-184, there 184; G.A. Hoevers, 'Berichten en mededeelingen – De Protestantenbond en de Ned. Herv. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1914-25 (20 June 1914), 216.

<sup>132</sup> C.J. de Kruijter, 'Een bewogen tijdvak, 1914-1952', in: K.G. van Manen (ed.), *Lutheranen in de Lage Landen. Geschiedenis van een godsdienstige minderheid (ca. 1520-2004)* (Zoetermeer 2011), 567-649, there 590, 604. Heering is wrong to state that this association only came into being *after* the First World War. See: Heering, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd', 107. Already before 1913, liberal Lutherans had organised themselves separately in several municipalities, including Amsterdam and Rotterdam. See: Th.A. Fafié, 'Van het revolutiejaar tot het begin van de Eerste Wereldoorlog, 1848-1914', in: Van Manen (ed.), *Lutheranen in de Lage Landen*, 481-565, there 528. This association sought contact with Lutheran members of NPB branches in order to strengthen their bonds with the Lutheran Church. See, e.g.: 'Kerknieuws – Algemeene Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Lutherschen', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCVIII.31855 (8 November 1925), morning paper, 6.

<sup>133</sup> 'Binnenland – De Evangelische Unie', *De Hervorming* 1897-10 (6 March 1897), 39.

<sup>134</sup> H.Ph. de Kanter, 'De Evangelische Unie', *Ibid.* 1897-46 (13 November 1897), 193; Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 250, 254. For more on the relatively strong position liberal Protestantism had in North Holland around 1900, see: E.J. Tillema, *De kop in de wind. Ter gelegenheid van het 110-jarige jubileum van de Vereniging van Vrijzinnige Protestanten in Noord-Holland* (Rotterdam 2014).

In a series of articles published in 1902 and 1903 in *De Hervorming*, B.W. Colenbrander tried to create a sense of urgency among his modernist church members to found a “new Reformed society,” by which he meant the establishment of a liberal sub-denomination within the framework of the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>135</sup> Some of Colenbrander’s fellow church members argued that the *Evangelische Unie* should be reformed in such a way that it would be more active.<sup>136</sup> Others agreed with Colenbrander that another type of organisation was needed.<sup>137</sup> Yet, all *volkskerk*-minded modernists were of the same mind on one point: something had to be done to strengthen liberals’ position within the Dutch Reformed Church. In the build-up to the 1903 NPB meeting, it was obvious that these modernists would no longer reconcile themselves to the existing situation. The NPB commission for Dutch Reformed modernists tried to take charge by making the suggestion to allow Reformed liberals to organise themselves as a subgroup within the NPB. During the meeting, Eerdmans showed himself to be a firm advocate of this suggestion. Although he was one of the leading men of the *Evangelische Unie*, he admitted that this organisation “purely has a defensive character and tries to bring together people of different persuasions in order to combat confessionalism. We cannot use it for the positive work we have to do.”<sup>138</sup> With ‘positive work’, Eerdmans meant that Reformed liberals should not only counterattack confessionalism, but also had to build a materially and spiritually prospering community of their own to be able to preserve and enlarge their influence within the Dutch Reformed Church. In a more militant spirit than Eerdmans, C.J. Niemeijer defended the proposal to enable members of the Dutch Reformed to set up a church-based subgroup within the NPB.<sup>139</sup> He warned that if the NPB assembly voted down the proposal, the NPB’s own future would be at stake:

This organisation [of Reformed liberals] needs to come into being, it will come into being, [indeed] it comes into being. The only question is: how? We wish to bring it into being within the framework of the NPB [...]. For the NPB, it is to be hoped that this will succeed. [...] If not, the NPB lays a burden upon itself. A separate organisation will then arise next to the NPB and will, as can be expected, soon stand in opposition to the NPB. If Reformed modernists have to organise themselves outside of it, they can no longer look at the NPB in the same way as they do now.<sup>140</sup>

However, the assembly’s majority agreed with W. Zaalberg, Van Loenen Martinet, Maronier and Colenbrander that the NPB, as an interdenominational union, should not concern itself with the ecclesial interests of one particular group, and rejected the proposal. Niemeijer did not take this decision lying down. On 8 April 1904, he and four like-minded Dutch Reformed ministers

<sup>135</sup> “...nieuw-hervormd genootschap...” Quoted from: Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *De Hervorming* 1903-09 (28 February 1903), 67-68.

<sup>136</sup> E.g.: A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘Kroniek’, *Teekenen des Tijds* V (1903), 167-178, there 174-178.

<sup>137</sup> E.g.: H. de G., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Waarop het aankomt’, *De Hervorming* 1903-16 (18 April 1903), 126.

<sup>138</sup> “Zij draagt een zuiver defensief karakter, en wil daarom lieden van verschillende richting samenbrengen ten einde het confessionalisme te weerstaan. Voor den positieven arbeid, dien wij hebben te verrichten, kunnen wij de Evangelische Unie niet gebruiken.” Quoted from: [B.D. Eerdmans in:] *Handelingen NPB* 1903, 51.

<sup>139</sup> Niemeijer had led the religious ceremony on the occasion of the annual meeting of the *Evangelische Unie* in 1899. See: C.J. Niemeijer, *Vrijheid en gezag. Rede, uitgesproken te Tiel, 15 November 1899, in een godsdienstoefening, gehouden bij gelegenheid van de tweede jaarvergadering der Evangelische Unie* (s.l. [1899]).

<sup>140</sup> “Die organisatie moet er komen, en zal er komen, en komt er. Het is maar de vraag, hoe. Wij wenschen haar tot stand te brengen in den Bond [...]. Het is voor den Bond te wenschen, dat dit gelukt. [...] En als het niet gelukt, wordt de zaak van den Bond veel erger. Dan zal er een organisatie komen naast den Bond, en zal het niet uitblijven, dat dit weldra wordt tegenover den Bond. Als de vrijzinnige Hervormden zich buiten den Bond moeten organiseren, kunnen zij in den Bond niet meer hetzelfde zien als nu.” Quoted from: [C.J. Niemeijer in:] *Handelingen NPB* 1903, 50.

convened in Leeuwarden to discuss whether it would be possible to “collect money, to provide [modernist] religious education and preaching; in other words, to preserve what would otherwise be lost and to bring power where weakness leads to decay,”<sup>141</sup> resulting in the founding of the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Friesland*.<sup>142</sup> In spite of the name ‘vrijzinnig’ (‘liberal’), which, as chapter 3 showed, used to be a term that was broader than ‘modernist’, this association did not want to include others apart from modernists. As Niemeijer explained several weeks later, all Dutch Reformed currents should separately organise themselves before they could collaborate with each other.<sup>143</sup> In retrospect, he thus felt that the creation of the *Evangelische Unie* had been premature. Other provincial associations of Reformed liberals, founded in 1904 and subsequent years after the example of the one in Friesland, nonetheless targeted both modernists and *evangelischen*, though they consisted mainly of modernists as well.<sup>144</sup>

Although the institutionalisation of the liberal faction within the Dutch Reformed Church was something new, the arguments that supporters of this institutionalisation used to defend their cause were not. Already in the late nineteenth century, *volkskerk*-minded modernists had stated that the modernist movement could not do without a strong representation in the Dutch Reformed Church, as this denomination was the ‘gateway to the masses’. Being the largest Protestant denomination in the Netherlands ever since the Reformation, the Dutch Reformed Church not only had congregations in most Dutch municipalities – with the exception of rural villages in the predominantly Catholic provinces of Brabant and Limburg –, it also had a massive following among Dutchmen from all walks of life<sup>145</sup> and exerted more influence on Dutch society and culture at large than any other Protestant community of faith.<sup>146</sup> For that reason, a numerous, powerful modernist presence in the Dutch Reformed Church was in the interest of Remonstrant, Mennonite, Lutheran and non-churchgoing modernists as well.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, as some had argued from the 1860s onwards, modernists had the historical and

<sup>141</sup> “...gelden te verzamelen, godsdienstonderwijs en prediking te verstrekken, in één woord: te bewaren, wat verloren dreigt te gaan, en kracht te brengen, waar zwakheid tot bederfvoert.” Quoted in: ‘Berichten, enz. – Kerkelijke actie van modern en in Friesland’, *De Hervorming* 1904-13 (26 March 1904), 100-101, there 101.

<sup>142</sup> Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 47-48.

<sup>143</sup> C.J. Niemeijer, ‘Kroniek’, *Teekenen des Tijds* VI (1904), 223-239, there 235-236; [C.J. Niemeijer in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Evangelischen en modern en’, *De Hervorming* 1904-27 (2 July 1904), 212-213, there 213.

<sup>144</sup> C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Overdreven bezwaren’, *Ibid.* 1909-50 (11 December 1909), 398-399, there 398; Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 260.

<sup>145</sup> E.g.: ‘Binnenland – Een adres aan de synode’, *De Hervorming* 1896-03 (18 January 1896), 11; [W. Schuurman and B.D. Eerdman in:] ‘Binnenland – Dordrecht’, *Ibid.* 1897-41 (9 October 1897), 162-163; W.C. van Manen and H. Oort, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Aan de vrijzinnige leden der Nederlandsch Hervormde Kerk’, *Ibid.* 1897-42 (16 October 1897), 166; W.C. van Manen, ‘Een tegenprotest’, *Ibid.* 1897-45 (6 November 1897), 178; W.C. van Manen, ‘Het fatale fragment’, *Ibid.* 1897-46 (13 November 1897), 182; Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *Ibid.* 1903-05 (31 January 1903), 35-36.

<sup>146</sup> E.g.: L. Knappert, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1893-09 (4 March 1893), 36; W.C. van Manen, ‘Uit Leiden’, *Ibid.* 1895-17 (27 April 1895), 67-68, there 67; B.W. Colenbrander, ‘De drang des tijds’, *Ibid.* 1896-28 (11 July 1896), 109-110, there 109; H. Oort, ‘Terug naar het heidendom’, *Ibid.* 1897-06 (6 February 1897), 21; Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *Ibid.* 1903-37 (12 September 1903), 291-292, there 292; B.D. Eerdman, ‘Over vrijzinnig-hervormden’, *Ibid.* 1905-20 (20 May 1905), 154-155, there 155; G. Nijhoff, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1906-20 (19 May 1906), 158-159, there 159; B.W. Colenbrander, *De Vereeniging der Vrijzinnig-Nederlandsch-Hervormden* (Schiedam 1905), 5; C.J. Niemeijer et al., ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Manifest’, *De Hervorming* 1910-45 (5 November 1910), 353-354, there 353.

<sup>147</sup> E.g.: Niemeijer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XV, 8-9. Some non-Reformed liberals acknowledged this as well. See, e.g.: A. van Buijten [S. Cramer], ‘De vrijzinnige hervormden en de vrijzinnige dissenters’, *De Hervorming* 1903-06 (7 February 1903), 42-43; 1903-07 (14 February 1903), 51-52.

moral right to be in the Reformed Church. Historical, because the modernist movement had not been ‘transplanted’ into this denomination, but had emerged within it; moral, because modernists were the true defenders of the Protestant principle of freedom of conscience.<sup>148</sup> Besides, even though confessionalists frequently filled modernists with despair, the multiform character of the Reformed Church was beneficial to both liberals and orthodox.<sup>149</sup> Modernist champions of the ideal of the *volkskerk* did not say that the various movements should share the same congregations – their differences were too fundamental for that –, but they did believe that it was best for these movements to stay together in the same denomination. The coexistence of several currents within the Reformed Church gave orthodox and liberals the opportunity to learn from each other; it forced them to continuously reflect on their own ideas and it would, as a consequence thereof, ultimately foster mutual appreciation.<sup>150</sup> *Volkskerk*-minded modernists felt that there was no urgency to go away. The practice in orthodox-dominated congregations might be different, but so far, the Dutch Reformed synod had never explicitly condemned liberal teachings, and had allowed modernist ministers to preach these teachings.<sup>151</sup> Lastly, in spite of its initial ambition to become the organisational home of all religious liberals, the NPB had never replaced the existing churches and had therefore to reckon with members belonging to different denominations. Because of this, and because of the anti-ecclesial disposition that had been quite manifest among its leading men, it was not the obvious organisation to uphold the interests of a particular group of churchgoing modernists. In addition, as said above, there was a feeling in Dutch Reformed circles that the NPB facilitated a transition towards the Remonstrant Brotherhood in particular.<sup>152</sup> In NPB circles, it was argued that NPB branches had in fact prevented

<sup>148</sup> E.g.: B.W. Colenbrander, ‘Uitgaan of uiteengaan?’, *Ibid.* 1897-01 (2 January 1897), 2; Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *Ibid.* 1903-09 (28 February 1903), 67-68, there 68; N.J. Telders, ‘De confessie-schroef’, *Ibid.* 1907-32 (10 August 1907), 252; C.J. Niemeijer, *Ons recht en onze plicht in de Ned. Hervormde Kerk* (Bolsward [1913]), 5-11. These arguments had already been put forward in: Kuenen, *Het goed recht der modernen*. In 1901, Eerdmans defended the claim that modernists had the historical and moral right to be in the Dutch Reformed Church in an original way, by arguing that modernist teachings were more in line with the Three Forms of Unity than orthodox ones. See: Eerdmans, *Het recht der vrijzinnigen*, 12-17. He reiterated this in: B.D. Eerdmans, ‘Pro’, in: B.D. Eerdmans and J. Slotemaker de Bruïne, *Het recht der vrijzinnigen in de N.H. Kerk* (Baarn 1907), 1-18, there 3-15.

<sup>149</sup> E.g.: [L. van Cleeff in:] ‘Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne predikanten uit de noordelijke provinciën te Leeuwarden, 20 Juni’, *De Hervorming* 1884-30 (26 July 1884), 120; [J. Knappert in:] ‘De 15<sup>e</sup> algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1885-46 (14 November 1885), 181-182, there 181; [J. Knappert in:] ‘De kerkelijke strijd te Amsterdam’, *Ibid.* 1886-20 (15 May 1886), 77-78, there 78; J. Knappert, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1887-03 (15 January 1887), 11; L. Knappert, ‘Roeping’, *Ibid.* 1903-23 (6 June 1903), 177-178, there 178; A. Priester, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Blijven in de Herv. Kerk’, *Ibid.* 1923-16 (21 April 1923), 124-126, there 126; Niemeijer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XV, 6.

<sup>150</sup> As A.C. Schade van Westrum wrote in 1921, this argument was “oftentimes and preferably used to defend and justify the existence and continued coexistence of diverse currents within the same denomination” (“*ziedaar een vaak en bij voorkeur gebruikt argument om het bestaan en het handhaven der verschillende richtingen in eenzelfde kerkverband te verdedigen en te rechtvaardigen*”). Quoted from: A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De verschillende richtingen in de kerk’, *De Hervorming* 1921-21 (28 May 1921), 163-165, there 164. In two brochures, Eerdmans stressed that the coexistence of liberals and orthodox in one denomination was primarily to the benefit of the latter. Liberals, he explained, stood firm for genuine religiosity. This genuineness was what orthodoxy lacked; orthodox preachers, so he claimed, had in fact more liberal religious views than they were willing to admit on the pulpit. Only liberals could create a more open climate in the church. See: Eerdmans, *Het recht der vrijzinnigen*, 26-27; Eerdmans, ‘Pro’, 15-18.

<sup>151</sup> E.g.: B.D. Eerdmans, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1897-46 (13 November 1897), 184; Eerdmans, *Het recht der vrijzinnigen*, 9-12; L. Knappert, ‘Roeping’, *De Hervorming* 1903-23 (6 June 1903), 177-178, there 178.

<sup>152</sup> E.g.: [C.J. Niemeijer in:] *Handelingen NPB 1909*, 41-51, there 47. Niemeijer accused non-Reformed liberals of thinking only about their own interests, namely an enlargement of their respective denominations, instead of the interest of the modernist movement as a whole, which he considered to be an enlargement of the modernist current in the Dutch Reformed Church. After all, he argued, the *volkskerk* offered modernists most opportunity to influence religious life and social life. See: Niemeijer, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XV, 7.

modernists who were dissatisfied with the Reformed Church from becoming apostates and had stimulated children of Dutch Reformed parents not to renounce their family's church background.<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, what mattered was not the thriving of church life as such, but the dissemination of the modernist principles. Those such as Van Loenen Martinet thought that being a modernist ought to prevail over being a member of a particular denomination.

The provincial associations of Reformed liberals were joined by individuals, by parts of or entire Reformed congregations and in some cases even by local NPB branches.<sup>154</sup> Moreover, in many places, municipal branches came into existence under their banner. Their rapid growth confronted these provincial associations with two questions: the extent to which it was necessary to tighten their interrelationships in order to coordinate their activities, and the nature of their relationship to the *Evangelische Unie*. To satisfactorily solve both issues, a joint meeting of the *Evangelische Unie* and representatives of the provincial associations of Reformed liberals was held in 1906. There, it was decided to install a Central Committee, federatively encompassing all provincial associations, and to dissolve the Evangelical Union,<sup>155</sup> which, in spite of Niemeijer's words that it would not be passed over,<sup>156</sup> had basically become redundant. Because the intensified factional struggle in the Dutch Reformed Church called for well-structured and larger-scaled action, the Central Committee was replaced by the centralised *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Nederland*, endowed with decisive authority, in 1913.

As most local branches of Reformed liberals began to offer religious services and religious education of their own, they poached on the territory of NPB branches. The relationship between (what would become) the VVH and the NPB remained rather ambiguous and even became outright antagonistic on occasion. A clear illustration thereof is the controversy between Van Loenen Martinet and Niemeijer. The former had always been quite vocal about his dislike of denominational life and his dissatisfaction with the 'ecclesial turn'. He was therefore not very pleased with the attempts of some Reformed liberals to organise themselves in separate church-based associations and implied in 1908 that these attempts would never be able to reform the Dutch Reformed Church in such a way that it would please liberals, as "the modernist faction in the Dutch Reformed Church is, as a party of action, dead and buried."<sup>157</sup> This remark provoked Niemeijer to heap reproaches upon Van Loenen Martinet:

That you are no friend of the Dutch Reformed Church, that you do not have an eye for the great interests which are involved with the endeavour to maintain and strengthen the position of liberals in this denomination, that, partly as a consequence thereof, your magazine is a false reflection of

<sup>153</sup> E.g.: I. van den Bergh, 'Protestantenbond en kerk', *De Hervorming* 1910-30 (23 July 1910), 235.

<sup>154</sup> In Friesland and Gelderland, for example, several NPB branches joined the provincial association of Reformed liberals. See: 'Berichten, enz. – Ver. van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Friesland', *Ibid.* 1904-16 (16 April 1904), 123-124, there 124; K., 'Berichten, enz. – Ver. van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Gelderland', *Ibid.* 1908-30 (25 July 1908), 236.

<sup>155</sup> Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 55-56. The dissolution of the *Evangelische Unie* was effectuated on 18 January 1907. See: *Ibid.*, 52. Klooster gives a slightly different account. According to him, the *Evangelische Unie* was transformed into the said Central Committee. See: Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 57.

<sup>156</sup> [C.J. Niemeijer in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Hervormden in Friesland', *De Hervorming* 1904-14 (2 April 1904), 108.

<sup>157</sup> "...de moderne partij in de Hervormde Kerk, als partij van actie, dood is en begraven." Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De vrijzinnige hervormde predikanten', *Ibid.* 1908-18 (2 May 1908), 141.

what is being thought, felt, considered and done in liberal circles – I have noticed all this, much to my regret, already several times and now notice it again.<sup>158</sup>

Although both men would clash several times later<sup>159</sup> and Van Loenen Martinet continued to look at the church as a superseded institution,<sup>160</sup> he did come to appreciate the VVH as a sign of renewed modernist vigour in the Dutch Reformed Church. For their part, kingpins of the VVH as Niemeijer and Eerdmans were not against the NPB – on the contrary, both of them continued to actively participate in it –, but contended that it should abstain from involvement with church life. They reasoned that the NPB had resolutely positioned itself outside of the ecclesial domain in 1903 and could therefore no longer sincerely maintain its aim to contribute to the advancement of free religion within the churches. As Niemeijer suggested, the NPB had three tasks to fulfil. First, it had the symbolic role of embodying the spiritual unity of the modernist movement.<sup>161</sup> Second, it should concentrate on the development of modernism outside of the churches.<sup>162</sup> Third, it could still devote itself to activities for the benefit of the modernist movement at large.<sup>163</sup> This intermediate role could, however, only be a limited one. Because the various denominational groups of modernists were engaged in a competitive struggle with each other and with the NPB, they were no longer willing to just accept a central position of the latter within the modernist movement.<sup>164</sup> What is more, the NPB had more and more turned into a denomination-like bond of church-like congregations, into “a church next to the churches.”<sup>165</sup> When in 1923 Roessingh, in a lecture titled ‘*Eenheid en organisatie van het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme*’ (‘Unity and Organisation of Liberal Protestantism’), sharply criticised the modernist movement for being institutionally divided, for lacking common goals and for not being heard in Dutch society, the NPB therefore

<sup>158</sup> “*Dat gij geen vriend zijt van de Ned. Hervormde Kerk, dat gij geen oog hebt voor de groote belangen, die gemoeid zijn met het streven, om de positie der vrijzinnigen, in die kerk te handhaven en te versterken, dat, mede daardoor, uw blad een zeer onzuivere weerspiegeling is van wat in vrijzinnige kringen wordt gedacht en gevoeld, overwogen en gedaan, ik bemerkte het tot mijn leedwezen reeds meermalen, en ik bemerk het nu weer...*” Quoted from: [C.J. Niemeijer in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De vergadering van vrijzinnigen’, *Ibid.* 1908-19 (9 May 1908), 148.

<sup>159</sup> E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Een nabetrachting’, *Ibid.* 1908-50 (12 December 1908), 395-396; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Bogerman in den Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1909-48 (27 November 1909), 379; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Een misverstand’, *Ibid.* 1909-50 (11 December 1909), 395.

<sup>160</sup> As he made clear in: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Kroniek’, *Nieuw Theologisch Tijdschrift* V (1916), 93-104, there 103. Also in 1916, Meyboom indicated to be of the same mind. See: H.U. Meyboom, *De toekomst onzer kerken* (Buitenpost [1916]), 10-11.

<sup>161</sup> [C.J. Niemeijer in:] ‘Een verzinsel’, *De Hervorming* 1910-43 (22 October 1910), 337-338, there 338.

<sup>162</sup> [C.J. Niemeijer in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1909-45 (6 November 1909), 356-357, there 356.

<sup>163</sup> C.J. Niemeijer et al., ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Manifest’, *Ibid.* 1910-45 (5 November 1910), 353-354; C.J. Niemeijer, ‘Verblijdt u! Toespraak van dr. C.J. Niemeijer in de openbare godsdiensttoefening te Alkmaar 28 October 1913’, *Ibid.* 1913-44 (1 November 1913), 345-347, there 347.

<sup>164</sup> Mentioned in, e.g.: G. Hulsman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Parturiunt montes, et...?’, *Ibid.* 1923-27 (7 July 1923), 210-212, there 212. Several months before Roessingh’s lecture, a discussion on the institutional fragmentation in liberal Protestant circles was held in *De Stroom*. The ultimate ideal of one church that would unite all liberal Protestants was still cherished, but, as S.H.N. Gorter concluded from the discussion, denominationalism was too strong to realise it any time soon. Gorter advised Dutch Reformed liberals to preserve their position within the Dutch Reformed Church, while he urged non-Reformed liberals to ‘prepare’ themselves for unification. In due course, both groups should form some kind of federation, allowing Reformed liberals to continue to be part of the Dutch Reformed Church at the same time as well. See: S.H.N. Gorter, ‘In den stroom – Kerkvorming’, *De Stroom* II.4 (6 January 1923), 2; S.H.N. Gorter, ‘Onze tribune – Kerkvorming’, *Ibid.* II.5 (13 January 1923), 2; II.6 (20 January 1923), 2-3; II.7 (27 January 1923), 2-3; II.8 (3 February 1923), 2-3; II.9 (10 February 1923), 2-3. Every group considered itself to be more ‘liberal’ than others. E.g.: ‘Kerknieuws – De Remonstrantsche Broederschap als vrijzinnige centrale’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXXIV.34 (4 February 1927), morning paper B, 2.

<sup>165</sup> “...een kerkje naast de kerken...” Quoted from: Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 53.



had to face reality.<sup>166</sup> Although the NPB had been founded in 1870 to tackle the exact same points of criticism that Roessingh put forward, a new organisation was now created to do that: the *Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig-Protestantisme*, in which the NPB, the VVH, the Remonstrant Brotherhood, the modernist majority of Mennonites, the General Association of Liberal Lutherans, the Free Congregation in Amsterdam and several other modernist organisations were represented.<sup>167</sup> The founding of the CC compelled the NPB to definitively give up its pretention to be the pivot of the modernist movement, and put it in its place – that is, a place *next* to the churches instead of above it.<sup>168</sup>

## 5. The Modernist Movement and Church Reforms: An Evaluation

As a consequence of the then dominant opinion in modernist circles that church life had to be reformed, two attempts were made in the 1870s to shape the faith community of tomorrow.<sup>169</sup> The first attempt was the founding of the NPB in 1870. Created to counteract confessionalism and to bring modernists with different denominational backgrounds together, some of its founding fathers and sympathisers hoped that it would come to replace conventional church life. Yet, its ambiguous character made this impossible: the NPB wanted to enhance the free development of religious life both within and outside the churches. It was an ideal shelter for modernists who were chased out of their congregations by uncompromising orthodox church councils, but who did not want to break with church life altogether. As a result, many local branches quickly turned from lecture and debating clubs into church-like congregations that offered religious services, provided religious education and, in due course, even began to build chapels and to appoint pastors.<sup>170</sup> The experimental potential of the NPB was accordingly nipped in the bud.

A second, more radical attempt to bring the religious community of the age to come into being was the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam in 1877 by a number of displeased Dutch Reformed modernists. The Free Congregation abolished baptism and the Lord's Supper, did not have a deaconry, was structured like any other voluntary association, did not celebrate several Christian festivals and propagated the study of religions other than Christianity. Its founding was, however, not followed elsewhere in the Netherlands. Displeased

<sup>166</sup> C.E. Hooykaas agreed with Roessingh that modernists had to tighten their bonds, for the following reasons: the ongoing factional quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church, Roman Catholics' ostentatious display of power, the socially disruptive consequences of the First World War and the threat of a new war, and the need to exert a stronger influence on cultural life. See: C.E. Hooykaas, 'Godsdienstig leven in Nederland CCCXCVII. Drieërlei uitzicht', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCVI.30958 (18 May 1923), evening paper, 9; C.E. Hooykaas, *Drieërlei uitzicht. Gedachten inzake de federatie der vrijzinnige godsdiensten* (Rotterdam [1923]), 14.

<sup>167</sup> M.A. Beek, 'Vijftig jaren Centrale Commissie', *Theologie en Praktijk* XXXIV.1/2 (1974), 59-72; Heering, 'Het vrijzinnig protestantisme op de drempel van een nieuwe tijd', 133-136.

<sup>168</sup> As H.T. de Graaf concluded in 1930, denying what Gorter had said several years before, no one in the modernist movement any longer aspired after the original intention of the NPB to fuse together all denominational groups of modernists. See: H.T. de Graaf, *Kerk en kerkgaan XX. Onderlinge verhoudingen en samenwerking* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 5.

<sup>169</sup> In a 1916 brochure, Meyboom mentioned the Free Congregation and the NPB as exceptions to Protestant ecclesiology, which was identical to Roman Catholic ecclesiology in the sense that it considered the institution of the church to embody the Kingdom of God. Interestingly enough, he depicted the NPB as a church denomination, not as a religious association. He hence implied that he regarded NPB branches as congregations with an ecclesial character. See: Meyboom, *De toekomst onzer kerken*, 12-13.

<sup>170</sup> In 1885, Carpentier Alting, who had initiated the founding of the NPB, stated to have not expected that many NPB branches would develop in this direction. As demonstrated in chapter 1, his intention had been to create a network of local associations that would unite all opponents of confessionalism, instead of associations that basically functioned as nondenominational modernist congregations. See: Carpentier Alting, *De godsdienst der toekomst*, 18.

Dutch Reformed modernists who were willing to leave their church instead joined other denominations, particularly the Remonstrant Brotherhood. Moreover, there were serious doubts as to whether the Free Congregation was indeed as different from church life as it tried to be. As S. Cramer wrote in 1880:

The more I read and think about it, the more surprised I become that, although I felt a good deal of sympathy for its founding, the Free Congregation (or a Remonstrant congregation) can claim to be something fundamentally different than any regular Reformed, Lutheran or Mennonite congregation. That it does not involve itself with poor relief does not change a thing about [its] religious fundamentals. That it has substituted child baptism for some kind of public felicitation on behalf of the congregation [...] – this is something that, just as baptism as such or prayers, one can only see in a group of devout co-religionists and something one would rather expect to see in a religious meeting of pietists or Darbyites than in an association that has seceded from the church because this church, to quote Hugenholtz, ‘tries to bring together consecrated souls’.<sup>171</sup>

The Free Congregation, Cramer implied, had only slightly modified traditional church rituals and fulfilled the exact same functions as any random church congregation.

Regarding institutional reforms within the existing church denominations, modernists were in a position to bring about structural changes in the 1870s and early 1880s. In the Remonstrant Brotherhood, confirmed modernists, led by C.P. Tiele, managed to replace the rather traditionally formulated 1861 statement of principles with a new one in 1879. This revision meant that the Remonstrant Brotherhood, already having a modernist-oriented majority, firmly and decisively opted for modernism.<sup>172</sup> It also caused some moderately orthodox ministers, whose theological convictions closely resembled those of Dutch Reformed *evangelischen*, to resign or to no longer meet their colleagues, and led to the ultimate extinction of moderate orthodoxy within the Brotherhood. When, in 1906, G. van der Pot (1842-1906) died as the last moderately orthodox Remonstrant minister, and the board of the Remonstrant congregation in Waddinxveen subsequently asked permission to appoint a moderately-orthodox Dutch Reformed minister as his successor, this was denied: the national governing body of the Brotherhood proclaimed that only Remonstrant ministers, who were all modernists at the time, were eligible to succeed Van der Pot.<sup>173</sup> The process of turning the entire Brotherhood into an all-modernist denomination was thereby complete.

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<sup>171</sup> “*Hoe meer ik er over lees en denk, hoe meer ’t mij bevreemdt, bij al mijne onverdeelde sympathie voor de stichting der Vrije Gemeente, dat zij (of de remonstrantsche) wezenlijk meenen kan iets anders te wezen dan iedere gewone hervormde, luthersche, doopsgezinde gemeente. Dat zij geen armenzorg oefent, verandert toch aan den godsdienstigen grondslag eener vereeniging niets. Dat zij den kinderdoop verving door een soort van publieken gelukwensch uit naam der gemeente [...]; dit past toch alweêr, evenals eigenlijk de doop zelf, of ’t gebed, alleen in een kring van vrome geestverwanten; en zou men dus eer in een oefening of eene darbisten-vergadering verwachten, dan in eene vereeniging die zich van de kerk afscheidde o.a. omdat die kerk te veel ‘een kring van godgewijde zielen wil samenbrengen’ (Hug.).*” Quoted from: S. Cramer, ‘Wat in maart gebeuren zal’, *De Hervorming* 1880-11 (13 March 1880), 41-42, there 42.

<sup>172</sup> T.R. Barnard, ‘Remonstrantie: banier of steen des aanstoots’, in: K.J. Holtzapffel and Th.M. van Leeuwen (eds.), *De Remonstrantie 400 jaar. Ontstaan, historie, actualiteit* (Zoetermeer 2010), 92-105, there 94-96. A strong incentive for the Remonstrant Brotherhood to turn into a modernist denomination was the desire to attract individuals from the highest strata of society. See: E.H. Cossee, Th.M. van Leeuwen and M.A. Bosman-Huizinga, *De remonstranten* (Kampen 2000), 41.

<sup>173</sup> Both cases are mentioned in: T.R. Barnard, ‘Hoe het is, hoe het was en hoe het zo geworden is. De Remonstrantse Gemeente Rotterdam van 1850-2000’, in: T.R. Barnard and E.H. Cossee (eds.), *Arminianen in de Maasstad. 375 jaar Remonstrantse Gemeente Rotterdam* (Amsterdam 2007), 63-113, there 72.

In contrast to their Remonstrant counterparts, Dutch Reformed modernists refrained from seizing momentum. In the 1870s and early 1880s, they were still fairly well represented on the church council level and sometimes even had a majority in the synod. This was, for example, the case in 1883. That year, the synod dealt with a formula that candidate ministers had to endorse to be ordained. Modernists, who were generally displeased with the existing formula, could have forced a change, but one of them, then president of the synod J.J.L. Luti (1831-1901), voted along with his confessionalist colleagues, and another modernist, A.A. Land (1850-1910), did not cast a vote at all. The year before, when the synod had approved a modernist-friendly proposal to give congregations the right to split up, president Luti had already ruined modernists' chances of success by promulgating that provincial church councils had to endorse the synodal decision with a two-thirds majority instead of a regular one. F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. therefore reacted with great irritation in *De Hervorming*. Due to Land and Luti, a major opportunity to reform the Dutch Reformed Church in a modernist way was thrown away.<sup>174</sup> Land explained that he had refrained from voting out of politeness towards an orthodox colleague, who had been ill and had consequently not been able to take part in the voting.<sup>175</sup> Luti thought it unethical to issue fundamental reforms by making use of a coincidental modernist majority in the synod, while the majority in the Dutch Reformed Church did not belong to the modernist movement.<sup>176</sup>

Of all modernist plans for reform that were rejected, the failed attempt to split congregations up or subdivide them into parishes was mourned over most. By allowing minorities in congregations to become autonomous or semi-independent, advocates of this idea argued, all currents could develop without hindering each other. There was, however, one flaw in their argument. Any subdivision or split would be based on the situation as it existed at that moment. Fluid boundaries between currents would become sharp demarcation lines. 'Border traffic' would be severely hampered. Could religious life really develop freely in such a static church landscape? Would there still be space for new currents to come into being? These were questions upon which modernist opinion makers did not really reflect. And if the autonomy of all factions was the issue at stake here, would it not be better to split up not only local congregations, but also the entire Dutch Reformed Church? Why should the Dutch Reformed Church as a denomination be preserved? The answer is rather profane: because factional autonomy was not the *only* issue at stake. The determination to stay in the Dutch Reformed Church was also a material issue for modernists in the 1870s and 1880s. If modernists would voluntarily go away, they would give up all their claims to church property, such as buildings and diaconal funds.<sup>177</sup> A majority of Dutch Reformed modernists apparently felt that this church denomination should therefore continue to exist, albeit as a mere administrative body.

In the 1870s and 1880s, an anti-ecclesial spirit was dominant in the NPB and *De Hervorming*. This is not to say that every modernist rejected ecclesial structures and rituals, but the opinion that the institution of the church was a relic of supernaturalism, hindering a free

<sup>174</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – De jongste besluiten der Ned. Herv. synode', *De Hervorming* 1883-37 (15 September 1883), 146; F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Binnenland – De kerkelijke kwestie', *Ibid.* 1883-43 (27 October 1883), 169-170.

<sup>175</sup> A.A. Land, 'Ingezonden stukken – Rectificatie', *Ibid.* 1883-41 (13 October 1883), 164.

<sup>176</sup> J.J.L. Luti, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het besluit der synode omtrent art. 27', *Ibid.* 1883-42 (20 October 1883), 167-168, there 168.

<sup>177</sup> B.W. Colenbrander later admitted that this was one of the reasons for modernists to stay in the Dutch Reformed Church. See: Colenbrander, *De Vereeniging der Vrijzinnig-Nederlandsch-Hervormden*, 11.

development of religious life, clearly prevailed among then modernist opinion leaders. The hope that the existing church life, particularly the Dutch Reformed Church, would disintegrate into autonomous congregations and that the NPB would foreshadow the organised religious life of the future, in which all modernists would be united, was ventilated loudly in *De Hervorming*; few dissenting opinions were set against it. However, in the late 1880s, this gradually began to change. Kuiperians' attempt to tear the Dutch Reformed Church apart in 1886 and subsequent years, during the so-called '*Doleantie*', triggered those modernists who did not hope for a disintegration of the existing church life to make themselves more heard. Dissatisfaction now became manifest with the anti-ecclesial spirit in which F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. and his successor J. van Loenen Martinet had so far edited *De Hervorming*: both of them had championed a division of the Dutch Reformed Church along factional lines, and the *Doleantie* seemed to force such a division. Van Loenen Martinet accordingly regarded the *Doleantie*, evolving around Kuiperians' claim to church property, as a legitimate cause and as the ultimate proof that a coexistence of orthodox and liberal Protestants within the same church denomination was at the expense of both groups. Because he was the editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming*, the magazine of the NPB, it might seem as if his sympathy for the *Doleantie* was representative of the modernist movement as a whole. This provoked protest among modernists who did not see the *Doleantie* as a legitimate cause at all, necessitating the NPB, as explained in chapter 2, to stress in the subtitle of *De Hervorming* that Van Loenen Martinet's opinions were no official NPB statements in any way.

Modernist voices defending the Dutch Reformed Church not only began to swell because of discontent with Van Loenen Martinet's rather sympathetic editorials on the *Doleantie*, but also because the *Doleantie* was a threat to the ideal of the Dutch Reformed Church as a *volkskerk*, as a spiritual home for all Dutchmen and Dutchwomen, regardless of their specific conception of God and their positions in society. This ideal had already been slumbering in liberal Reformed circles prior to the *Doleantie*, but actively upholding it had now become an absolute necessity: after all, Kuiper and his supporters explicitly said that they aspired after the destruction of the Dutch Reformed Church as *volkskerk*.<sup>178</sup> The ideal of the *volkskerk* came to be upheld in liberal Reformed circles with even more intensity in the twentieth century. This was, on the one hand, due to the revival of factional quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church: being recovered from the turmoil that the *Doleantie* had caused in its midst, orthodoxy again took up its endeavour to 'heal' the Dutch Reformed Church by restraining modernism.<sup>179</sup> It was, on the other hand, due to a growing feeling of marginalisation in the modernist movement at large, with which subsequent chapters deal in more detail. In reaction to this perceived marginalisation, it came to be emphasised in liberal Reformed circles that the Dutch Reformed Church was

<sup>178</sup> P.A. van Leeuwen, *Het kerkbegrip in de theologie van Abraham Kuiper* (Franeker 1946), 114-115.

<sup>179</sup> As said before, J. van Loenen Martinet had predicted that this would happen. The founders of the *Evangelische Unie*, such as *evangelische* Reformed minister N. Kamp (1843-1911), implicitly admitted that he was right: "Even though the Reformed Churches have emerged next to the Dutch Reformed Church, we should not believe that the spirit of formalism has now disappeared in the latter. [...] So much illusion and untruthfulness! So much form over essence! So much literalism over the vivifying [liberal] spirit!" ("Maar al zijn nu 'de Gereformeerde Kerken' naast de Nederl. Hervormde Kerk opgericht, toch moeten wij niet meenen, dat in de laatste de geest van het formalisme geweken zou zijn. [...] Hoeveel schijn en onwaarheid! Hoeveel vorm boven het wezen! Hoeveel letterknechterij boven den levendmakenden geest!") Quoted from: N. Kamp, *Het formalisme in de Christelijke Kerk van vroegere eeuwen en onzen tijd. Rede, gehouden te Utrecht op de vergadering der Evangelische Unie, den 15 November 1900* (Tiel [1900]), 7.

modernists' gateway to the masses and that this church denomination offered modernists the opportunity to directly encounter – and hence to influence – Protestant orthodoxy.

Modernist voices proclaiming that the institution of the church had had its day not only died down as a result of the rise of *volkskerk*-mindedness, but also as a result of evaporating hope. Those who championed the ideal of the free congregation as an 'experimental garden' in which alternatives to church life would be developed, came to acknowledge that their hope of a realisation of this ideal was in vain. The Free Congregation in Amsterdam continued to be the only one of its kind, and truly satisfactory new forms of worship that could replace the ecclesial ones had still not been found. Recognising that it was not realistic to expect that this would change any time soon, modernists such as F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., H.U. Meyboom and even J. van Loenen Martinet reconciled themselves to the existing configuration of church life. In early twentieth-century liberal Reformed circles, the anti-ecclesial spirit with which they and others had imbued the modernist movement in the 1860s until the 1890s was looked upon with regret and even resentment. It was said to have weakened modernists' drive to defend their rights in the Dutch Reformed Church.<sup>180</sup> In addition, the NPB was accused of facilitating the crossover of Reformed liberals to other church denominations, particularly the Remonstrant Brotherhood, as such decimating the number of modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church. The objection that the NPB, by organising religious services, had actually preserved modernists for the Dutch Reformed Church who would have otherwise resigned their church membership altogether, could not alter that sentiment.<sup>181</sup>

Ecclesial self-awareness, the awareness of being different from liberal Protestant groups in other church denominations, increased among Lutherans, Mennonites and Remonstrants as well.<sup>182</sup> Regarding the latter in particular, this had to do with the influx of modernists from the Dutch Reformed Church into their ranks, which strengthened a positive self-image.<sup>183</sup> It was moreover a reaction to the growing intensity with which the ideal of the *volkskerk* was put forward in liberal Reformed circles.<sup>184</sup> Non-Reformed modernists rejected the thought, implied in the ideal of the *volkskerk*, that it was in the interest of the modernist movement as such to join the Dutch Reformed Church. They were appalled by the insinuation that they extracted modernists from the Dutch Reformed Church by 'proselytising' through the NPB. In fact, they rather felt that Reformed liberals had always played first fiddle in the NPB and indicated to have primarily

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<sup>180</sup> E.g.: Beversluis, *Samen bouwen*, 9.

<sup>181</sup> E.g.: W. Zaalberg, 'Herinneringen en wensen', *De Hervorming* 1895-45 (9 November 1898), 177-178; H. Oort and W.H. Stenfort Kroese, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Hoofdbestuur', *Ibid.* 1896-29 (18 July), 114.

<sup>182</sup> Mennonite modernists had always been keener to accentuate the features that distinguished them from other modernists, but the emphasis on their Mennonite identity intensified at the beginning of the twentieth century. See: A.F. de Jong, 'Zoektocht naar de doperse identiteit', *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks* XXXVIII (2012), 17-60, there 17. Zwanepol notices that a sense of 'otherness' increased in early twentieth-century Lutheran circles as well. See: K. Zwanepol, *De Evangelisch-Lutherse Kerk* (Kampen 2002), 28.

<sup>183</sup> Exemplary in this respect is Remonstrant minister N. Blokker's remark that the Remonstrant Brotherhood was 'more needed than ever' from the late nineteenth century onwards, to provide a place of refuge to Reformed liberals. See: N. Blokker, *Kerk en kerkgaan X. De Remonstranten* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 4-5.

<sup>184</sup> L. Knappert sharply recognised this: at the meeting of modern theologians in 1926, he stated that the ecclesial quarrels in the Dutch Reformed Church and Reformed liberals' endeavour to strengthen their position, which stemmed from those quarrels, had a "repercussion" ("*terugschlag*") on non-Reformed liberals, who had begun to show a stronger devotion to their own church denominations as well. See: [L. Knappert in:] 'Kerknieuws – Moderne theologen', *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXXIII.103 (14 April 1926), evening paper B, 1-2, there 2; Knappert, 'De historische verklaring der gehechtheid aan eigen kerkgenootschap', 191.

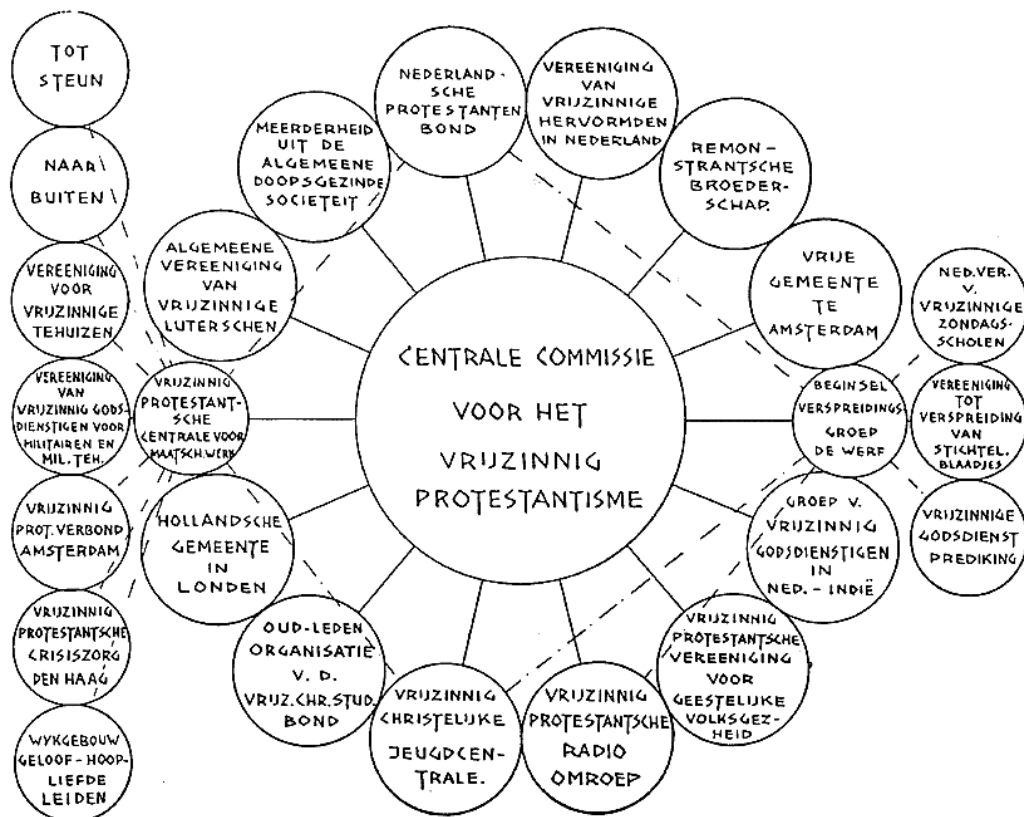
joined the NPB in solidarity with ‘oppressed’ modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church, not because the association had themselves much to offer. When Reformed liberals urged the NPB to concern itself more directly with the reinforcement of their position in the Dutch Reformed Church, it was therefore decided at the 1903 general NPB assembly not to comply with their request: focusing on Reformed liberals’ interests might intensify the feeling among other modernists to play second fiddle in the NPB indeed and might even estrange those others from the NPB, threatening the modernist movement with disintegration. As a result, while continuing to participate in the NPB in order to keep in touch with modernists from other church denominations, Reformed liberals founded an association of their own, the VVH, parallel to the NPB. Because the VVH not only took part in church council elections, but also challenged the NPB on its own ground by organising religious services and religious education, the relationship between the two associations was somewhat strained.<sup>185</sup>

Both in Reformed and non-Reformed modernist circles, the rise of malcontentism, which was more church-centred than old-school modernism, was a last factor contributing to the ‘ecclesial turn’ in the modernist movement in the late 1890s and early twentieth century. This ‘ecclesial turn’ affected the position of the NPB in the modernist movement: ecclesial groups of modernists became keener on strengthening their own ranks than in sacrificing their chances of reinforcement for the benefit of the NPB. The position of the NPB was further weakened due to the circumstance that, as said, many of its branches had developed into church-like congregations and even adopted church rituals: in the twentieth century, a growing number of branches began to organise baptismal services, celebrations of the Lord’s Supper and ceremonies resembling the confirmation of new members in church denominations. The NPB had in large part become a league of nondenominational congregations, because of which it increasingly came to be seen as a competitor to, rather than a mainstay of, groups of modernists in denominational life. In consequence, the willingness within those groups to continue to grant the NPB a central position in the modernist movement diminished. When the aforementioned feeling of marginalisation persuaded modernists of the necessity to federate themselves in order to counteract Roman Catholics’ and orthodox Protestants’ dominance in society, the NPB was therefore superseded – instead, a new organisation, the CC, was founded in which the NPB had a position equal to the denominational groups of modernists.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Beversluis, *Een halve eeuw strijd en opbouw*, 62-65.

<sup>186</sup> Which was deplored in NPB circles; repeatedly, NPB leaders stated to feel that the NPB should have been the CC and that it had not been necessary to found a new organisation. E.g.: G. Hulsman, ‘Een wederwoord’, *De Hervorming* 1925-20 (15 May 1925), 153-154; G. Hulsman, ‘Een woord ter verheldering’, *Ibid.* 1925-41 (10 October 1925), 322-324, there 322; [G. Hulsman in:] ‘Kerknieuws – De crisis in den Ned. Protestantenvond’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXII.292 (21 October 1925), evening paper A, 1; J.J. Meyer, ‘Centrale Commissie of Protestantenvond’, *Het Vaderland* (20 March 1926), morning paper B, 5; J.J. Meyer, ‘Centrale Commissie of Protestantenvond’, *De Hervorming* 1926-14 (3 April 1926), 105-106, there 106; J.J. Meyer, ‘De Protestantenvond en het rapport van de commissie-Enschede’, *Het Vaderland* (23 October 1926), evening paper D, 2; [C.R. Sijsling in:] ‘Leiding en beleid in den bond’, *De Hervorming* 1926-48 (27 November 1926), 377-379, there 378; [C.R. Sijsling in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Nederlandsche Protestantenvond’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIII.333 (1 December 1926), morning paper A, 3; J.J. Meyer, ‘De Ned. Protestantenvond’, *Het Vaderland* (4 November 1930), evening paper D, 1. M.C. van Mourik Broekman stressed that the main difference between the CC and the NPB had to do with the membership of both corporate bodies: the former was a federation of liberal Protestant church denominations and organisations, while the latter was an association of individuals. By being an NPB member, individual modernists could contribute to the activities of the CC. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond’, *De Hervorming* 1930-



Organisational chart of the Central Commission for Liberal Protestantism in the late 1930s.

Source: *Het werk der Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme* ([Utrecht 1939]), 5.

10 (8 November 1930), 74. See also: 'Overzicht over den arbeid der Centrale Commissie van 1923-1937', in: *De Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme*, 21-84, there 25.

## 5. LITTLE RELIGIONS, ‘LIBERAL’ TENDENCIES AND ATHEISM

### 1. Liberal Protestantism Broadened to ‘Free Religiosity’?

In early 1923, H.G. van Wijngaarden (1876-1929), the then pastor of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, took stock of the outcomes of a discussion that he had started several years before. Those outcomes, he had to conclude, were rather disappointing:

Already four years ago, the Federation of Free Religious Groups and Organisations was founded, and the simultaneous attempt was made to bring the liberal Protestant church communities closer together. How these ideas were applauded by some! How those endeavours encountered strong opposition among others! The [latter’s] fear was either that Christianity would be sold out to Theosophy, Spiritism and liberal Judaism or that schisms and ecclesial destruction were aimed for, or that the holy domain of one’s own sacred community would be entered by [others’] unholy feet. These novelties [the Federation and the attempt to tighten modernists’ bonds, TK] did not find a hearing.<sup>1</sup>

Later in 1923, one of the endeavours to which Van Wijngaarden referred here was realised after all: together with a handful of other organisations, the various denominational groups of liberal Protestants joined forces in the Central Commission for Liberal Protestantism, already mentioned in the previous two chapters. The CC was structured as a federation: the NPB, the Free Congregation, the associations of Reformed and Lutheran liberals and the Remonstrant Brotherhood were separately represented in its framework in order to preserve each group’s identity and autonomy. The General Mennonite Society also associated itself with the CC, but only on behalf of the Mennonite majority. This was so because, as its then chairman P. Feenstra, Jr. (1850-1936) explained, all Mennonites were liberal or *vrijzinnig*, in the sense that they championed the freedom of every individual to formulate his own confession of faith, but not every Mennonite could identify with the modernist movement; at that time, the theological views of approximately one in every three Mennonites were (moderately) orthodox rather than modernist.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, the other endeavour of which Van Wijngaarden made mention, the so-called ‘*Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties*’, had already ended in failure prior to 1923 and would not be regenerated afterwards. While the CC only consisted of liberal Protestant groups, the Free Religious Federation, which Van Wijngaarden had founded himself in 1919, had intended to bring those groups closer together within a broader framework of groups that, just as liberal Protestants themselves, offered religious alternatives to Christian (both Protestant and Catholic) orthodoxy. In Van Wijngaarden’s view, liberal Protestantism was part of a larger cluster of spiritual currents that he (tried to) put together under the umbrella of ‘free religiosity’. This cluster included Spiritism, Theosophy and liberal Judaism – examples he used in the quote above – as well as Christian Science, the Old Catholic Church and a bunch of religious-

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<sup>1</sup> “Het is nu alweer vier jaar geleden, dat de Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties werd opgericht en dat tegelijk beproefd werd de vrijzinnig kerkelijken dichter tot elkaar te brengen. Hoe werden de ideeën door sommigen toegejuicht! Hoe wekte bij anderen deze pogingen fel verzet! Men was bang, dat men het christendom aan theosophie, spiritisme en vrijzinnig jodendom zou verraden; of dat men het kerkscheuring en kerkvernietiging aanlegde; of dat men het heilig erf der gewijde kringgemeenschap met onheilige voeten wilde komen betreden. Van deze nieuwigheden moest men niets.” Quoted from: [H.G. van Wijngaarden], ‘De federatiegedachte’, *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* VI (1923), 44-45, there 44. See also: [H.G. van Wijngaarden in:] ‘Kerknieuws – De federatiegedachte’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCVI.30893 (13 March 1923), 10.

<sup>2</sup> S. Voolstra (A. Voolstra, A.G. Hoekema and P. Visser eds.), *Beeldenstormer uit bewogenheid. Verzamelde opstellen van Sjouke Voolstra* (Hilversum 2005), 301-308.



philosophical-humanistic associations such as *De Nieuwe Gedachte* (The New Thought) and *De Middaghoogte* (The Meridian).<sup>3</sup> What were the intentions and motivations behind the endeavour to assemble the modernist movement and those other ‘free religious’ groups in a federation? What was this federation supposed to do and pursue? Why was it founded around 1920 and not, for example, two or more decades earlier? Why was it, as Van Wijngaarden remarked in the quote above, welcomed by some and resisted by others? Why did it quickly perish? And why had the NPB, which was forced to let the CC play the role of federation of liberal Protestant groups in 1923, while it was destined to play this role itself, not been granted to play the role of federation of free religious groups in 1919 either?

In his standard work on liberal Protestantism, Lindeboom does not bother to deal with the Free Religious Federation at great length, feeling that “its development has been too insignificant and its achievement too negative.”<sup>4</sup> Yet, the federation had more significance than Lindeboom acknowledges – not so much because of what it actually did – which was indeed little –, but because it stemmed from the ongoing discussion concerning the questions of how to define what modernism was and who belonged to the modernist movement – that is, questions regarding modernists’ identity and the boundaries of the modernist movement. Chapter 3 has already analysed the attitudes that different generations and groups of modernists adopted towards orthodoxy. But, in search of its own identity, the modernist movement had not only to define its boundaries ‘to the right’, to Christian orthodoxy, but also ‘to the left’, to the occultist, humanistic and idealistic ‘little religions’ that began to emerge as of the late nineteenth century and that Van Wijngaarden included in the concept of ‘free religiosity’. Just as Van Wijngaarden’s federation had done, the rise of these little religions provoked different reactions among modernists. This rise was not the only development in religious life that aroused modernists’ interest. The same went for potential alternatives to the existing church life that began to emerge *within* Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism, such as Old Catholicism and the neo-Calvinist ‘movement of youngsters’, for ‘liberal’ tendencies in religions other than Christianity, and for movements that pursued a change of mentality in society by ‘spiritualising’ education. Moreover, modernists were faced with a growing number of people who abandoned church life, and sometimes religious life altogether. Modernists’ reactions to the emergence of all of these alternatives to orthodoxy – regardless of whether an alternative was religious or not –, and the influence this emergence exerted on the development of the modernist movement are interpreted in this chapter.

## 2. Modernism and the Rise of ‘a Hundred and One Prophets’

In the introductory chapter, five processes have been discerned that are constitutive elements of ‘modernisation’. Together with the development of a scientific world view, starting in the early-modern era, two of these processes in particular contributed to the rise of what J. Bois has called ‘*petites religions*’ and what historian J.M. Romein (1893-1962) has described as ‘a hundred and one prophets’: the individualisation of life styles, and the privatisation of religion. The little

<sup>3</sup> Brolsma interprets the rise of associations as *De Nieuwe Gedachte* in the context of the cultural crisis and the longing for a new kind of universal, humanistic spirituality, both of which resulted from the First World War. See: M. Brolsma, “*Het humanitaire moment*”. *Nederlandse intellectuelen, de Eerste Wereldoorlog en de crisis van de Europese beschaving (1914-1930)* [unpublished dissertation, University of Amsterdam, 2015].

<sup>4</sup> “...het verloop [is] te onbelangrijk, en het resultaat te negatief geweest.” Quoted from: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 101.

religions include, among others, Spiritism, Theosophy, Christian Science, Buddhist-oriented spirituality, Anthroposophy and all other kinds of occult, esoteric and mystical philosophies of life.<sup>5</sup> Historian P. de Rooy considers them to be part of a larger ‘humanitarian-idealistic’ movement, also encompassing dietary, medical and social reform ‘isms’ as vegetarianism, teetotalism, antivivisectionism and the disciples of Russian anarchist L. Tolstoy (1828-1910).<sup>6</sup> Although those isms were not religious in themselves, their adherents often had religious motivations for embracing them. For instance, there was a strong feeling among Theosophists that a Theosophical outlook on life should automatically lead to a vegetarian and teetotal life style.<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding differences, the little religions could all be seen as attempts to harmonise religion and contemporary culture.<sup>8</sup> They were all said to have a scientific, empirical and logical basis. Spiritists claimed that individuals who had attained a certain level of spiritual enlightenment, called ‘spiritual intermediaries’, could communicate with the spirits of deceased people and could thus empirically verify the existence of an afterlife.<sup>9</sup> Arguing that “matter, sin, and sickness are not real, but only illusions,” Christian Science was based on a standardised, ‘scientific’ method of praying and mental training, which, if followed correctly, would heal all mental and physical affections.<sup>10</sup> Theosophy, to take a final example, was said to be evidence-based as well, and intended to blend contemporary science together with the wisdoms that could be distilled out of all world religions into an ‘occult science’.<sup>11</sup> Their intention to bring religion, culture and science into a satisfactory synthesis was a characteristic that the little religions had in common with Protestant modernism. A comparison between the little religions and modernism, both emerging in the second half of nineteenth century, shows that their likeness went even further.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>5</sup> J.M. Romein, *The Watershed of Two Eras. Europe in 1900* (Middletown 1978), 499-500. See also: A.A. Kluvel, *Reis door de hel der onschuldigen. De expressieve politiek van de Nederlandse anti-vivisectionisten, 1890-1940* (Amsterdam 2000), 23, 247, note 2.

<sup>6</sup> Romein, *The Watershed of Two Eras*, 494-508; P. de Rooy, ‘Een hevig gewarrel. Humanitair idealisme en socialisme in Nederland rond de eeuwwisseling’, *BMGN CVI.4* (1991), 625-640, there 626, 640.

<sup>7</sup> Theosophy strongly propagated vegetarianism. See: J.J. Poortman, ‘Theosophie’, in: W. Banning et al. (eds.), *Encyclopaedisch handboek van het moderne denken* (Arnhem 1950), 753-758, there 757.

<sup>8</sup> This interpretation, put forward by W.J. Hanegraaff and others, conflicts with the older view that these new forms of spirituality were *anti*-modern and should consequently be seen as anti-rational and as a rejection of modern science. See: L.K. Vermeer, “‘Als de tafel danst, dan wankelt de wetenschap’”. De relatie tussen spiritisme en wetenschap in Nederland rond 1900’, *Gewina XXX* (2007), 26-43, there 29-30. In Dutch historiography, this last view of late nineteenth-century spirituality was popularised by J. Romein.

<sup>9</sup> For the scientific claims of Spiritism, see, e.g.: E. Sargent, *The Scientific Basis of Spiritualism* (Boston 1881). ‘Spiritism’ is sometimes called ‘Spiritualism’, although some authors make a distinction between the two. Von Hartmann, for example, distinguishes ‘Spiritism’, “the explanation of mediumistic phenomena by the cooperation of spirits”, from ‘Spiritualism’, which is a broader term, referring to “the metaphysical position opposed to Materialism.” Quoted from: E. von Hartmann (C.C. Massey ed.), *Spiritism* (Cambridge etc. 2012), 1. Von Hartmann’s definition of ‘Spiritualism’ includes modernism. To avoid terminological confusion, the word ‘Spiritism’ is used in this chapter in accordance with Von Hartmann. The phenomenon Sargent describes as ‘Spiritualism’ would be called ‘*spiritisme*’ (‘Spiritism’) in Dutch.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in: O. Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge. Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden 2001), 445. For the scientific claims of Christian Science, see, e.g.: S. Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley etc. 1973), esp. 280-281.

<sup>11</sup> For the scientific claims of Theosophy, see, e.g.: A. Marques, *Scientific Corroborations of Theosophy* (London 1908). ‘Theosophy’ was in fact an umbrella term for several, closely related esoteric schools of thought. See: N.A. Bruining, *Geestelijke stroomingen* (Amsterdam 1923), 97-98.

<sup>12</sup> In historiography, it is not common for (the rise of) liberal Protestantism to be dealt with in relation to (the rise of) the little religions. A notable exception is Van der Wall, who puts modernism on a par with agnosticism, atheism, socialism, Christian Science, Theosophy, Buddhism and Spiritism as alternatives to Christian orthodoxy emerging in the late nineteenth century. See: E.G.E. van der Wall, ‘Between Faith and Doubt: The Role of Fiction’, *TF XXXV.1* (December 2005), 56-75, there 62.

The little religions were characterised by a high degree of eclecticism, combining elements of one religion with those of another. Nonetheless, most of them were rooted in or largely inspired by Christianity. Because of that, they managed to exert some attraction in Protestant circles. As church historian D. Jansen shows, particularly Spiritism gained a conspicuous, albeit small, following among *evangelischen* in the third quarter of the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup> In the eyes of some *evangelische* ministers, Spiritism proved that the souls of deceased people lived on after death and could appear in human shape during séances, making it plausible that the Gospel narratives about apparitions of Jesus after his crucifixion are indeed about historical facts. Decades later, some modernists felt attracted to Spiritism as well.<sup>14</sup> Modernist ministers as C. Hille Ris Lambers and A.H. van der Hoeve exemplified that one could simultaneously be a modernist and a Spiritist: in their opinion, Spiritism was just a ‘supplement’ to modernism, enabling modernists to acquire more assurance in their faith, and furnishing liberal Protestantism with more emotional intensity. In modernist circles, little religions were seen as ‘signs of the times’, as expressions of the (spiritual) period of transition modernists believed they were living in and as confirmation of their conviction that modern man could not satisfy himself with traditional forms of religion.<sup>15</sup> Yet, the opinion of ministers as Hille Ris Lambers and Van der Hoeve that they were fully compatible with liberal Protestantism was anything but generally accepted. There was no consensus among modernists as to whether the little religions moved within, on the fringes of, or completely outside of the modernist movement. In essence, it was this question around which all discussions on the little religions in modernist circles revolved.

Modernists and the adherents of little religions mostly belonged to the classes, causing Marxist historian Romein to pejoratively call the latter “bourgeois, one-sided, unreal, decadent, pathological and inhuman because of a lifeless humourlessness.”<sup>16</sup> The modernist movement and the little religions were accordingly imbued with the optimism, the idealism and the faith in the almost unlimited abilities of man that were characteristic of the bourgeoisie in the last half of the nineteenth century and the *fin-de-siècle* era. The old-school modernist interpretation of ‘sin’ as a temporary human shortcoming, as an error that could be overcome through ethical self-improvement and the eradication of ignorance, somewhat resembled the Christian Scientist definition of ‘sin’ as a distortion of the human mind that could be nullified by thinking it away.<sup>17</sup> Theosophy and modernism more or less shared the evolutionary idea that by gaining more insight into the true nature of reality and mankind’s relation to reality, humanity moved

<sup>13</sup> D. Jansen, *Op zoek naar nieuwe zekerheid. Negentiende-eeuwse protestanten en het spiritisme* (s.l. [1994]).

<sup>14</sup> D. Jansen, ‘Slauerhoff, Hille Ris Lambers en het spiritisme’, *It Beaken* LIV (1992), 155-173; Jansen, ‘Spiritist of alleen maar vrijzinnig en eigenzinnig?’. In the early 1900s, Hille Ris Lambers even held séances in the building of the Dutch Reformed congregation in Jorwerd. See: D. Jansen, ‘Remonstrant tussen unitarisme en spiritisme. Ds. Cornelis Willem van der Pot (1813-1891)’, in: E.H. Cossee and H.D. Tjalsma (eds.), *Remonstranten en het unitarisme* (Utrecht 2000), 30-41, there 38.

<sup>15</sup> See, e.g.: B. Tideman Jz., ‘Leestafel – “Mijn Jezus”’, *De Hervorming* 1901-50 (14 December 1901), 397 [This issue is erroneously numbered as ‘1901-49’]; H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Een nieuw christendom?’, *Ibid.* 1905-09 (4 March 1905), 66-68, there 66; F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Ingezonden – “De Nieuwe Gedachte” - Een teken des tijds’, *Ibid.* 1916-11 (11 March 1916), 91; H. Oort, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Referaat in de bijeenkomst van moderne theologen’, *Ibid.* 1916-20 (13 May 1916), 162-164, there 163; De St., ‘Leestafel – Uit de tijdschriften’, *Ibid.* 1917-39 (29 September 1917), 321.

<sup>16</sup> “... ‘bourgeois’, ‘eenzijdig’, ‘onwerkelijk’, ‘verwend’, ‘ziekelyk’ en ‘onmenselyk door een bloedeloze humorloosheid’.” Quoted from: Kluvel, *Reis door de hel der onschuldigen*, 23. See also: F.G. Huisman and H. te Velde, ‘Op zoek naar nieuwe vormen in wetenschap en politiek. De “medische” kleine geloven’, *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXV.3 (2001), 129-136, there 129-130.

<sup>17</sup> R.R. Losch, *The Many Faces of Faith. A Guide to World Religions and Christian Traditions* (Grand Rapids 2001), 190.

towards ultimate perfection, the completion of the Kingdom of God.<sup>18</sup> An early twentieth-century ethical reform group called the '*Rein Leven-beweging*' ('Pure Life Movement'), whose members stressed the importance of sexual education, vegetarianism and teetotalism, agreed with modernists that the roots of social wrongs were of a spiritual kind.<sup>19</sup>

The adherents of little religions and, as analysed in chapter 6, first-generation and a majority of later-generation modernists believed that in order to reform society, individuals had to be reformed.<sup>20</sup> This conviction was, in turn, connected to a strong emphasis on the value of 'personality' and 'individuality': people should be *individuals*, thinking for themselves, taking responsibility for their own actions, acquiring a *personal* faith through studying and soul-searching – in sum, realising their full spiritual potential. Aiding people in becoming individuals was the incentive behind modernists' and little religionists' social commitment. As chapter 7 shows, some modernists nonetheless came to embrace political socialism, advocating that individual reform was not a prerequisite for social reform, but rather that individual reform would only be possible if the fabric of society were to be reformed first. The same applied to the adherents of little religions: although socialist leaders initially disqualified them in words similar those of Romein quoted above, De Rooy notices that they were disproportionally represented among the supporters of socialist politics in the early twentieth century.<sup>21</sup>

A particular feature of the little religions was their receptivity to female leadership. As gender and religious studies scholars Sered and Braude show, they gave women the chance to play an active, even a central role in religious communities.<sup>22</sup> It was no coincidence that the founders of Christian Science and Theosophy as well as many spiritual intermediaries during Spiritist séances were women. To quote historian Bednarowski, Spiritism, Christian Science and Theosophy had four characteristics in common that advanced female leadership and equality between men and women: "a perception of the divine that deemphasized the masculine either by means of a bisexual divinity or an impersonal, nonanthropomorphic divine principle; a tempering or denial of the doctrine of the Fall;<sup>23</sup> a denial of the need for a traditional ordained clergy; [and] a view of marriage that did not stress the married state and motherhood as the proper sphere for woman and her only means of fulfillment."<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the emotionalism and sentimentalism, or, in the eyes of critics, 'hysteria' associated with little religions were seen as

<sup>18</sup> A. Stasulane, *Theosophy and Culture. Nicholas Roerich* (Rome 2005), 152; H.P. Blavatsky, *The Key to Theosophy. An Exposition of the Ethics, Science, and Philosophy* (s.l. [1889] 2007), 36.

<sup>19</sup> F.L. Ortt, *De Rein Leven-Beweging. Ontstaan, doel, beginselen en organisatie der Rein Leven-beweging* (Amsterdam 1909), 5, 7; A.A. Kluvel, 'Felix Ortt. De kleine geloven als brug tussen wetenschap en geloof', *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXV.3 (2001), 137-146, there 145.

<sup>20</sup> De Rooy, 'Een hevig gewarrel', 626. To take the *Rein Leven-beweging* as example, its members stressed that individual purity would be the *sine qua non* on which a new, improved society could be built. See: A. de Groot, 'De lust tot last. De Rein Leven Beweging als pionier in de strijd om de nieuwe mens', *Groniek* XXVI (1993), 55-64, there 59.

<sup>21</sup> De Rooy, 'Een hevig gewarrel', 639-640.

<sup>22</sup> A.D. Braude, 'The Perils of Passivity. Women's Leadership in Spiritualism and Christian Science', in: C.L. Wessinger, *Women's Leadership in Marginal Religions. Explorations outside the Mainstream* (Urbana 1993), 55-67, there 56; S.S. Sered, *Priestess, Mother, Sacred Sister. Religions Dominated by Women* (Oxford etc. 1994), 43-45.

<sup>23</sup> According to the orthodox Christian interpretation of the Fall, Eve seduced Adam into eating an apple from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden, depicting femininity as essentially depraved. By reinterpreting or denying the Fall of man, 'little religions' offered the opportunity to see femininity in a more positive light.

<sup>24</sup> M.F. Bednarowski, 'Outside the Mainstream. Women's Religion and Women Religious Leaders in Nineteenth Century America', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XLVIII.2 (1980), 207-231, there 209. See also: W. de Blécourt, 'De macht van de vrouwelijke hand. De feminisering van het magnetisme rond 1900', *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXV.3 (2001), 147-160.

typically ‘feminine’ traits.<sup>25</sup> Within Protestantism, modernists were most susceptible to female leadership: they were the first to accept women in the offices of minister, elder and deacon in the early twentieth century,<sup>26</sup> although voices rejecting the appointment of women in ecclesial offices continued to be heard among them.<sup>27</sup>

Modernists on whom little religions exerted some attraction did usually not defend their cause by highlighting similarities between little religions and modernism, but by characterising the former as supplementary to the latter. Some of their fellow modernists who felt no attraction to little religions themselves were willing to go along with that thought, arguing that little religions could not do any harm and might do some good in individual cases. One of them was Dutch Reformed minister M.C. van Wijhe (1881-1953), who stated in 1915 to be no adherent of Christian Science himself, but to believe nonetheless that the Christian Scientific method of ‘healing through praying’ could lead to a genuine recovery of illness.<sup>28</sup> Others thought that the little religions should be looked upon with sympathy, seeing them as expressions of a free development of religious life and claiming that all sincere attempts to attain spiritual enlightenment should be appreciated and encouraged.<sup>29</sup> To quote one such modernist, all “mystical tendencies,” by which he referred to Spiritism and Theosophy, were “little creeks, which will be brought together by God into one big stream of healthy and vital religious life.”<sup>30</sup> It was recognised that the adherents of little religions shared with modernists a rejection of a materialistic world view, which denied the autonomous existence of a spiritual realm.<sup>31</sup> In the eyes of some, modernists should not be hesitant to borrow insights that little religionists put forward, as those insights could invigorate their own inner lives. As minister-lawyer F.C.M.

<sup>25</sup> See, e.g.: D. DuPont, *Writing Teresa. The Saint from Ávila at the fin-de-siglo* (Plymouth 2012), 7.

<sup>26</sup> M.P.A. de Baar et al. (eds.), *Honderd jaar vrouwen op de kansel, 1911-2011* (Hilversum 2011).

<sup>27</sup> For the discussion on female ministers, see: H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Vrouwelijk ambtswerk in ons gemeentelven’, *Uit de Remonstrantsche Broederschap* XVI (1904/1905), 137-161; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Vrouwelijke gemeentearbeit’, *De Hervorming* 1905-12 (25 March 1905), 88-90; 1905-13 (1 April 1905), 97-98; 1905-14 (8 April 1905), 105-106; H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Vrouwelijke predikanten’, *Ibid.* 1905-16 (22 April 1905), 123-124; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Nogmaals vrouwelijke predikanten’, *Ibid.* 1905-17 (29 April 1905), 129-131; S. Cramer, ‘De predikante’, *Ibid.* 1905-19 (13 May 1905), 146-148; H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Vrouwelijke predikanten’, *Ibid.* 1905-22 (3 June 1905), 171-172; S. Tilma-Schaaff, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Vrouwelijke predikanten’, *Ibid.* 1905-23 (10 June 1905), 182-183; W. Snellen, ‘De “predikante”’, *Ibid.* 1905-27 (8 July 1905), 210-211; P. van Pesch-Bolleman, ‘De vrouw op den kansel’, *Ibid.* 1905-28 (15 July 1905), 218-219; H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Vrouwelijke predikanten’, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* XXVIII (1905), 232-241; H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1910-19 (7 May 1910), 151; J.F.D. Mossel, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Aan Professor H.Y. Groenewegen’, *Ibid.* 1910-20 (14 May 1910), 158; H.W. Nachenius, ‘Prof. Groenewegen en mej. Mossel’, *Ibid.* 1910-22 (28 May 1910), 172-173; J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Berichten, enz. – De eerste’, *Ibid.* 1911-31 (5 August 1911), 244-245; ‘De vrouw als predikant’, *Ibid.* 1911-36 (9 September 1911), 283-284; M.K.-H., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1911-41 (14 October 1911), 325; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘De vrouw als predikant’, *Ibid.* 1911-52 (30 December 1911), 414-415; 1912-01 (6 January 1912), 3-5; 1912-02 (13 January 1912), 9-10; 1912-03 (20 January 1912), 18-19; 1912-04 (27 January 1912), 26-28; A.L. Met-Rasch, ‘De vrouw als predikant’, *Ibid.* 1912-09 (2 March 1912), 67-68.

<sup>28</sup> M.C. van Wijhe, ‘Ingezonden’, *Ibid.* 1915-51 (18 December 1951), 466. Former Mennonite minister H. Bakels expressed himself in similar terms with regard to Spiritism. See: H. Bakels, ‘Ingezonden – Kloppen aan de verkeerde deur’, *Ibid.* 1922-32 (12 August 1922), 254.

<sup>29</sup> P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Tot vrijheid geroepen’, *Ibid.* 1903-26 (27 June 1903), 201-202, there 202; J. Herderschee, ‘Leestafel – “De ware weg”’, *Ibid.* 1917-09 (3 March 1917), 72.

<sup>30</sup> “...als kleine beekjes, die op den duur door God tot één grooten stroom zullen worden geleid van, moge het zoo zijn, gezond en krachtig godsdienstig leven.” Quoted from: M. van de Westerwaert, ‘Hoofdartikelen – De tegenwoordige zucht naar mystiek’, *Ibid.* 1916-08 (19 February 1916), 57-58, there 58.

<sup>31</sup> M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Waarde in het occultisme’, *Ibid.* 1919-42 (18 October 1919), 187-188; E. Vreede, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Rudolf Steiner’, *Ibid.* 1921-06 (12 February 1921), 43.

Boenders (1887-1955) wrote in 1918, alternative spirituality had the potential to enrich modernism and vice versa; therefore, “let us hope that we, modernists, are able to get through to [little religionists] and that they, in turn, are able to reach us. There is a wealth of devoutness at our left, unknown to many of us.”<sup>32</sup> Dutch Reformed Spiritist propagandist J. van Rees-van Nauta Lemke (1854-1928) even went so far as to exclaim that Spiritist teachings *completed* modernism, and that modernist ministers would no longer have to complain about empty or half-full churches if they could sermonise about the immortality of the human soul with absolute certainty. Spiritism could give them that certainty.<sup>33</sup>

Other modernists, however, were not convinced of the harmlessness of the little religions. They did not hesitate to depict the little religions as ‘leading to idiocy’, ‘superstitious’, ‘delusional’, ‘aberrant’, ‘bizarre’ and ‘phantasmal’.<sup>34</sup> Notwithstanding the beneficial effect they might have on one’s faith, these modernists argued, the little religions should not be combined with a modernist persuasion.<sup>35</sup> In modernist discussions, six arguments were put forward to substantiate this.

First, it was denied in the modernist movement that the little religions were really as scientifically based as their adherents claimed they were. Remonstrant minister P. Eldering made a profound study of Spiritism in the 1910s, leading him to conclude that “the Spiritist hypothesis,” the postulate that spirits of deceased people can make themselves known through ‘intermediaries’ and even visible in so-called ‘materialisations’, is “scientifically unsupported.”<sup>36</sup> Yet, notwithstanding obvious cases of charlatanry and fits of frenzy, Eldering did acknowledge that occult occurrences as such could happen.<sup>37</sup> What he doubted was Spiritists’ explanation

<sup>32</sup> “Ik eindig [...] met de hartelijke wensch uit te spreken, dat wij ‘de buitenstaanders’ mogen bereiken en zij ons. Er zijn schatten van vroomheid ter linkerzijde van ons, waarvan de meesten onzer bijna niets vermoeden.” Quoted from: F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Aan ds. H. Bakels’, *Ibid.* 1918-33 (17 August 1918), 130.

<sup>33</sup> [J. van Rees-van Nauta Lemke in:] M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Hoofdartikelen – De stormloop der spiritisten’, *Ibid.* 1916-17 (22 April 1916), 134-135, there 135.

<sup>34</sup> See, e.g.: ‘Buitenland’, *Ibid.* 1877-07 (17 February 1877), 3; ‘Buitenland – Amerika’, *Ibid.* 1881-17 (30 April 1881), 68; ‘Het spiritisme’, *De Protestant* III.49 (5 December 1885), 1-2; J.W., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Jammerlijke afdwalingen’, *De Hervorming* 1886-14 (3 April 1886), 56; L. Knappert, ‘Paschen’, *Ibid.* 1893-13 (1 April 1893), 49-50, there 49; J.H. Maronier, ‘Theosophie’, *Ibid.* 1893-28 (15 July 1893), 109-110, there 110; [H. de Lang], ‘Buitenland – Nog een woordje over mrs. Eddy en de Christian Science’, *Ibid.* 1910-23 (4 June 1910), 180-181, there 181; [K. Meijer in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – “Nog eens over theosophie”’, *Ibid.* 1911-06 (11 February 1911), 43-44, there 44; [P. Eldering in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Een paar aardige vergelijkingen’, *Ibid.* 1911-17 (29 April 1911), 132; C.S.K., ‘Wandelen met God’, *Ibid.* 1924-01 (5 January 1924), 1; W.G. Reddingius, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Mystiek en wereldbeschouwing’, *Ibid.* 1924-06 (9 February 1924), 43-44, there 43.

<sup>35</sup> M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Hoofdartikel – Hiernamaals-voorstellingen’, *Ibid.* 1922-24 (17 June 1922), 185-187; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De aarde in den hemel’, *Ibid.* 1922-25 (24 June 1922), 195-196; Proost and De Haas, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme II*, 69-70.

<sup>36</sup> “...de spiritistische hypothese [is] [...] niet wetenschappelijk bewezen.” Quoted from: P. Eldering, ‘Ingezonden – Antwoord aan dr. C. Hille Ris Lambers’, *Ibid.* 1916-51 (16 December 1916), 445-446, there 445. See also: [P. Eldering in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Gouda’, *Ibid.* 1912-14 (6 April 1912), 105; P. Eldering, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Het spiritisme en de godsdienst’, *Ibid.* 1912-37 (14 September 1912), 294-295; [P. Eldering in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Leiden e.o.’, *Ibid.* 1913-10 (8 March 1913), 73; [P. Eldering in:] ‘Berichten en mededeelingen – De 51<sup>ste</sup> vergadering van moderne theologen’, *Ibid.* 1916-16 (15 April 1916), 128; [P. Eldering in:] M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Hoofdartikelen – De stormloop der spiritisten’, *Ibid.* 1916-17 (22 April 1916), 134-135, there 134; P. Eldering, ‘Ingezonden – Het spiritisme in de laatste algemeene vergadering van den Protestantenvbond’, *Ibid.* 1916-48 (25 November 1916), 421-422; P. Eldering, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Spiritisme’, *Ibid.* 1917-19 (12 May 1917), 155-156; P. Eldering, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Materialisaties’, *Ibid.* 1918-14 (6 April 1918), 55. A decade later, Mennonite minister F. Dijkema argued similarly with regard to Theosophy. See: F. Dijkema, *Theosofie als wetenschap* (Huis ter Heide 1928).

<sup>37</sup> See also: K.F. Proost and G. Horreüs de Haas, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme II. In zijne verhouding tot boeddhisme, mohammedanisme, occultisme, materialisme en humanisme* (Huis ter Heide 1927), 83.

that those occurrences were the result of the activation of spirits living in an invisible ‘world of ghosts’. While crossing swords with Hille Ris Lambers in the columns of *De Hervorming*, he repeatedly asked this Spiritist-minded minister to produce conclusive evidence of the truth of the Spiritist hypothesis.<sup>38</sup> According to Eldering, Spiritists based their interpretations of spontaneous events exclusively on the testimonies of *other* Spiritists, as a result of which they all referred to each other to prove themselves right instead of on irrefutable and verifiable experiments. Modern psychology and neurology, he continued, showed that the incidents that Spiritists attributed to apparitions could have something to do with nervous disorders or mental disturbances. Even if science was wrong in this respect, occult phenomena still did not prove the existence of spirits – they simply showed that there are unthought-of energies slumbering inside human beings.<sup>39</sup> By extension, Eldering’s conviction that Spiritism lacked a scientific foundation and scientific verification applied to other little religions as well. H.C. Lohr, for example, chided Theosophists for brushing aside scientific objections by alleging that some elect had a ‘sixth sense’, providing them with wisdom kept hidden from others.<sup>40</sup>

Second, modernists with an unfavourable outlook on little religions regarded occult experiences as autosuggestive, the results of nervous and psychological diseases or illusions.<sup>41</sup> Spiritists simply interpreted extrasensory events by using predetermined explanatory schemes. H.U. Meyboom even depicted Christian Science as “part of the human tragicomedy.”<sup>42</sup> Contrary to the contention that the little religions should be appreciated for challenging materialism, ministers as Eldering stated the opposite, as Spiritists came up with alleged ‘materialisations’ of spirits as the ultimate proof of the truth of their religious views.<sup>43</sup> Genuine religious life should not be dependent on such external ‘support’. Besides, the messages that Spiritists were said to have received during séances were all trivial and insignificant. What sense did it make for spirits to communicate “nonsense” instead of helpful insights for achieving spiritual enlightenment?<sup>44</sup>

Third, some felt that the little religions had more in common with Protestant orthodoxy than with modernism.<sup>45</sup> The very nature of the little religions was supernaturalistic, as they were based on the thought that humans needed a revelation from above, in the form of concealed ‘knowledge’, to be able to become fully ‘illuminated’.<sup>46</sup> Connected to this, monist modernists

<sup>38</sup> P. Eldering, ‘Ingezonden’, *De Hervorming* 1914-20 (16 May 1914), 175; P. Eldering, ‘Ingezonden – Antwoord aan dr. C. Hille Ris Lambers’, *Ibid.* 1916-51 (16 December 1916), 445-446. See also: H. de Lang, ‘Redactioneel – Geestverschijningen’, *Ibid.* 1916-51 (16 December 1916), 443.

<sup>39</sup> P. Eldering, *Het hedendaagsch spiritisme in zijne wetenschappelijke en godsdienstige waarde beoordeeld* (Zaltbommel 1917). See also: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Spiritisme en theosophie’, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente XXVII* (1904), 221-248, there 233.

<sup>40</sup> H.C. Lohr, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1906-29 (21 July 1906), 229.

<sup>41</sup> Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Spiritisme en theosophie’, 230, 245; Proost and De Haas, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 79.

<sup>42</sup> ‘Stadsnieuws – Vergadering moderne theologen’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1909-12067 (22 April 1909), 6. Roel Houwink would later blame Christian Science for teaching that evil was merely a mirage. See: R.M.F. Houwink, ‘Met onze lezers – Christian Science: de christelijke wetenschap?’, *De Stroom* VII.52 (1 December 1928), 2-3.

<sup>43</sup> J. van Konijnenburg, ‘Binnenland – De Goessche kwestie’, *De Hervorming* 1885-40 (3 October 1885), 158-159, there 159; [P. Eldering in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Gouda’, *Ibid.* 1912-14 (6 April 1912), 105.

<sup>44</sup> “...malligheden...” Quoted from: H. de Lang, ‘Redactioneel – Geestverschijningen’, *Ibid.* 1916-51 (16 December 1916), 443.

<sup>45</sup> E.g.: P.B. Westerdijk, *De nieuwere theosofie, van vrijzinnig-godsdienstig standpunt beoordeeld* (Assen 1906), 118; H. de Lang, ‘Buitenland – Annie Besant en de vrijzinnige godsdienstopvatting’, *De Hervorming* 1912-33 (17 August 1912), 260-261, there 261; Bruining, *Geestelijke stroomingen*, 119, 134.

<sup>46</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Treurige vruchten van het supranaturalisme’, *De Hervorming* 1885-29 (18 July 1885), 114.

disqualified occult faiths as dualistic: Spiritism postulated the existence of a supernatural ‘realm of spirits’, while Christian Science made a distinction between spirit and matter, God and man, and good and evil.<sup>47</sup> Another aspect that orthodox Protestants and the adherents of most little religions were said to share with each other was the way in which they read the Bible. As said, Spiritists, for example, regarded their interpretation of occult phenomena as apparitions to be the most logical explanation of the materialisations of Jesus as described in the New Testament. However, historical-critical biblical studies proved that these New Testament texts should not be taken literally at all.<sup>48</sup> Other modernists straightforwardly denied that the little religions had any connection to Protestantism whatsoever. The adherents of Christian Science and Anthroposophy in particular might be Bible-centred and use Christian imagery, but only selectively: they browsed through the Bible in order to find texts that they could interpret as confirmations of their hypotheses.<sup>49</sup>

Fourth, although both the modernist movement and the little religions recruited their following primarily from the bourgeois classes, the little religions were said to be ‘elitist’ and to lack ‘popular support’ in modernist circles. While modernists themselves faced similar accusations from orthodox Protestants,<sup>50</sup> some did not hesitate to mock Christian Science as having no appeal outside of “ladies’ circles” and to discredit Theosophy as something with which only “ladies and unbalanced youngsters” were concerned.<sup>51</sup> The perceived overrepresentation of women within the little religions and the ‘female’ sentimentality associated with them were accentuated to argue that they should not be taken too seriously. Eldering, again he, questioned the credibility of Spiritism by calling it “remarkable” that most mediums were women and, what is more, women “of Anglo-Saxon birth”; “the Germanic race,” he condescendingly remarked, “seems to produce fewer and also less powerful spiritual intermediaries.”<sup>52</sup> Using nationalist and gender terminology was a common disqualification strategy at the time. Eldering ridiculed Spiritism by sketching a dystopia of a society in which it would have a massive appeal:

If Spiritism, in the Netherlands and abroad, were to have millions of adherents and would attract intellectuals, professors, doctors, judges, ministers, teachers, educators [...], the strangest things could happen. The world would be a dangerous place for non-Spiritists. [...] Imagine what our country and nation would look like [if there were] one million individuals who think it is possible that unearthly beings, evil ones and less evil ones [...], can influence people, give them advise, stimulate or discourage them to do certain things, commit arson, throw people in the water, hang them on trees.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> [H. de Lang], ‘Buitenland – De kerk van de Nieuwe Gedachte’, *Ibid.* 1913-13 (29 March 1913), 101.

<sup>48</sup> J.C.V., ‘Leestafel – “Het land aan gene zijde” en “Het goed recht van het spiritualisme”’, *Ibid.* 1909-28 (10 July 1909), 221.

<sup>49</sup> E.g.: Bruining, *Geestelijke stroomingen*, 109-110, 135.

<sup>50</sup> Accentuated by G. Heuvelman, a defender of Theosophy. See: G. Heuvelman, ‘Ingezonden – Nog eens: theosophie’, *De Hervorming* 1916-32 (5 August 1916), 274.

<sup>51</sup> “...dameswereld...” Quoted from: [H. de Lang], ‘Buitenland – Een rebellie tegen mevr. Baker Eddy de kop ingedrukt’, *Ibid.* 1910-13 (26 March 1910), 102; “...dames [...] en onevenwichtige jongelui...” Quoted from: P. van der Meulen, ‘Ingezonden – Theosophie’, *Ibid.* 1916-30 (22 July 1916), 257.

<sup>52</sup> “Het is opmerkelijk, dat er over ‘t algemeen meer vrouwelijke dan mannelijke mediums zijn en dat er in verhouding zoovele van Anglo-Saksische afstamming zijn. Het Germaansche ras schijnt minder en ook minder sterke mediums voort te brengen.” Quoted from: Eldering, *Het hedendaagsch spiritisme*, 89.

<sup>53</sup> “Als het Spiritisme inderdaad zijne aanhangers in ons land en andere landen bij miljoenen ging tellen en als het ook verder doordrong in de wereld der intellectueelen, professoren, doctoren, rechters, predikanten, leeraren, onderwijzers [...], dan zouden er vreemde dingen kunnen gebeuren en zou het voor de niet-spiritisten ook een gevaarlijke wereld kunnen worden. Men stelle zich ons land en volk eens voor met [...] een millioen menschen, die het



This horror scenario, Eldering acknowledged, was still in the future, but it was not an illusion. Spiritism was an actual threat to spiritual well-being and social stability. Accordingly, modernist ministers in particular should see it as their task to stop Spiritism from spreading.<sup>54</sup>

Fifth, as Van Mourik Broekman wrote in 1922, “it is peculiar to notice that so many spiritual movements that emerged in the preceding century and have created organisations outside of church life, such as Theosophy, Christian Science, the Salvation Army and [Anthroposophy] as well, are centred around one individual.”<sup>55</sup> Although he admitted that this was conducive to their strength – he contrasted powerful, Kuyper-centred neo-Calvinism to marginalising, leaderless modernism to reinforce his point –, other modernists blamed the little religions for it. Already in 1910, H. de Lang had approvingly quoted an article in which Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910), the ‘founding mother’ of Christian Science, was accused of being a fraud, exploiting the gullibility of people who sincerely yearned for spiritual awakening. The gist of the article was that little religions required absolute submission to the teachings of their founders.<sup>56</sup> The little religions should accordingly not be seen as expressions of a free development of religious life, modernists such as De Lang felt, but rather as impediments to this development.

Sixth, there was criticism in the modernist movement of the way in which the life reform movements that accompanied the rise of the little religions put their principles into practice. The aim of the *Rein Leven-beweging* to spiritually arm individuals against bodily temptations, for example, was in itself seen as praiseworthy in modernist circles, as such temptations were detrimental to one’s inner life. Yet, the uninhibitedness with which the *Rein Leven-beweging* discussed sexual matters met with hardly any approval, for “victims of [sexual] sins will not be cured by namby-pamby argumentations.”<sup>57</sup> More than that, it was counterproductive, as it would arouse “a morbid interest in sexual matters.”<sup>58</sup> Imparting carnal knowledge to young adults more than once, and by people other than their parents would “desecrate and defile these sacred and intimate things.” Moreover, the *Rein Leven-beweging* was accused of being Pharisaic: it wanted to help individuals in internalising strong sexual morals, yet without strengthening individuals’ spiritual lives as a whole.<sup>59</sup> Movements for the advancements of vegetarianism and teetotalism

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*mogelijk achten, dat wezens, niet van deze aarde, booze en minder booze [...], ingrijpen in het leven, raadgevingen verstrekken, tot daden aansporen, van daden afhouden, brandstichten, menschen in 't water smijten en aan boomen ophangen.”* Quoted from: Eldering, *Het hedendaagsch spiritisme*, 166.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 167-168.

<sup>55</sup> “Eigenaardig is het op te merken, dat feitelijk zoovele bewegingen, die we op geestelijk terrein zagen opkomen in de voorgaande eeuw en die zich buiten-kerkelijk houdende organisaties schiepen, als theosophie, Christian Science, Leger des Heils, en ook [anthroposophie], zich concentreeren om een bepaalde persoonlijkheid.” Quoted from: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Karakter der anthroposophie’, *De Hervorming* 1922-16 (22 April 1922), 122-124, there 123.

<sup>56</sup> H. de Lang, ‘Buitenland – Krijtstreden bij de dingen van den dag’, *Ibid.* 1910-16 (16 April 1910), 126.

<sup>57</sup> “Slachtoffers van de hier bedoelde zonden worden, vreezen wij, niet geholpen door gemoedelijke redeneeringen.” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – “Rein Leven”’, *Ibid.* 1901-32 (10 August 1901), 250-251, there 251. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Goede woorden van Jan Ligthart’, *Ibid.* 1912-47 (23 November 1912), 381.

<sup>58</sup> “Een ziekelijke belangstelling in sexueele aangelegenheden...” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – “Rein Leven”’, *Ibid.* 1901-32 (10 August 1901), 250-251, there 251. Similar criticism was uttered in: S.K. Bakker, ‘Rein leven’, *De Blijde Wereld* IV.7 (8 December 1905), 2-3; IV.8 (15 December 1905), 1-2; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Een goed woord’, *De Hervorming* 1905-51 (23 December 1905), 404. A response to Bakker’s criticism was given in: S.C. Kijlstra, ‘Rein leven’, *De Blijde Wereld* IV.10 (29 December 1905), 2-3; IV.11 (5 January 1906), 1-2.

<sup>59</sup> “Herhaling zou deze geheiligde dingen ontheiligen, zou het zeer intieme bezoedelen.” Quoted from: S.K. Bakker, ‘Rein leven’, *De Blijde Wereld* IV.8 (15 December 1905), 1-2, there 2.

received similar criticism. In 1905, to take just one example, De Lang chided those who claimed that Jesus of Nazareth had been a teetotaler and a vegetarian for arguing that teetotalism and vegetarianism were intrinsic to true Christianity.<sup>60</sup> He and others were not against temperance and animal protection as such, but blamed the most zealous advocates of these causes for denouncing Christians who disagreed with them.

### 3. Modernists and Adherents of Little Religions: Attraction or Repulsion?

The arguments used in the modernist movement both to defend and to criticise the little religions did not alter as time progressed – in the 1920s, the same arguments were used as in the 1880s. Of all little religions, Spiritism was discussed the most in modernist circles.<sup>61</sup> It was the first little religion with which modernists were confronted and the one finding the most response among them. The reason for this is that Spiritism provided answers to questions particularly burning in *liberal* Protestantism: the immortality of the soul and the existence of an afterlife. Historical-critical biblical studies unsettled the belief in life after death. Spiritism, on the other hand, pretended to ‘prove’, by means of apparitions during séances, that the death of one’s physical body was indeed not the end of one’s existence.<sup>62</sup> In the eyes of some, it could thus solve what modernism could not.

Contrary to the arguments as such, the *interest* in the little religions did change over time; it increased in the early twentieth century, peaking in around 1920. A first reason for that had to do with a general trend in society at large: particularly in bourgeois circles, it came to be acknowledged that a purely materialistic outlook on life, as disseminated by science, was unsatisfactory, neglecting inner life.<sup>63</sup> New philosophies of life to fill this spiritual vacuum came to be looked for. Occultism, esotericism and mysticism, including Spiritism, Theosophy and Christian Science, which had all three originated in the second half of the nineteenth century, therefore began to attract more attention. The spiritual confusion and insecurity that the First World War caused in the mid-1910s intensified this trend, bringing into being all kinds of occult alternatives to the philosophies of life of the world that had died in battle, such as Anthroposophy and the abovementioned humanitarian-idealistic association *De Nieuwe Gedachte* in the Netherlands. A second reason had to do with a related trend in the modernist movement: dissatisfaction with the intellectualism, monism and optimism of old-school modernism manifested itself to the full around 1900. Some modernists, namely the malcontents, gave vent to this dissatisfaction by turning ‘right’, by falling back on ‘orthodox’ terminology

<sup>60</sup> H. de Lang, ‘Jezus geheelonthouder en vegetariër’, *De Hervorming* 1905-27 (8 July 1905), 209-210.

<sup>61</sup> In *De Hervorming*, a first article on Spiritism appeared as early as in 1874. See: ‘Mededeelingen en berichten – Binnenland’, *Ibid.* 1874-18 (30 April 1874), 3.

<sup>62</sup> For these claims, see, e.g.: Hugenholtz, ‘Spiritisme en Theosophie’, 230-231; M. Beversluis, *Spiritualisme en spiritisme* (Baarn 1909), 38-40; Eldering, *Het hedendaagsch spiritisme*, passim; Bruining, *Geestelijke stroomingen*, 90.

<sup>63</sup> One of the most vehement attacks on the materialistic character of nineteenth-century science was an article written by former freethinker Ferdinand Brunetière (1849-1906) and published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* in 1895. This publication led to an international discussion known as the ‘bankruptcy of science’ debate, which was symptomatic of the growing social and scientific dissatisfaction with a purely materialistic outlook on life. See also: J.Th.M. Bank and M.B. van Buuren, 1900. *Hoogtij van burgerlijke cultuur* (The Hague 2000), 288; K. Wils, *De omweg van de wetenschap. Het positivisme en de Belgische en Nederlandse intellectuele cultuur, 1845-1914* (Amsterdam 2005), 379; D.M. Baneke, *Synthetisch denken. Natuurwetenschappers over hun rol in een moderne maatschappij, 1900-1940* (Hilversum 2008), 123-126, 137, 201. On Brunetière and his anti-materialist views, see: J.M. Hecht, *The End of the Soul. Scientific Modernity, Atheism, and Anthropology in France* (New York etc. 2003), 173.

and imagery. Others, whose numbers were considerably smaller, turned ‘left’, supplementing their liberal Protestant faith with ‘occult’ elements. This last development raised the question of whether the NPB, and the modernist movement in general, should try to incorporate the little religions and their adherents or not.

One of the first and most talked-about modernists with little religionist sympathies was Dutch Reformed minister L.A. Bähler (1867-1941). In two 1903 publications, he showed an attraction to Buddhism, even regarding it as ethically, spiritually and intellectually superior to historical Christianity.<sup>64</sup> By so doing, he caused a good deal of controversy both in orthodox circles, resulting in the founding of the *Gereformeerde Bond* (Reformed League) as a new faction within the Dutch Reformed Church in 1906, after the Dutch Reformed synod had rejected an orthodox request to discharge Bähler from his ministry,<sup>65</sup> and in the modernist movement. Highly condemnatory reviews of Bähler’s publications appeared in *De Hervorming*.<sup>66</sup> Noticing how much discussion Bähler provoked, moderately orthodox Dutch Reformed minister A.W. Bronsveld (1839-1924) could not get away from the impression “that many modernists secretly want the modernist movement to be delivered from such an odd fish, who besmirches their cause.”<sup>67</sup> The fear was that views such as Bähler’s were grist to the mill of orthodox Protestants, confirming them in their opinion that modernists were not truly Christians. It was therefore questioned whether modernists should tolerate a crypto-Buddhist in their midst. Yet, the NPB did not alter its policy to welcome everyone who could reconcile NPB membership with his conscience.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>64</sup> L.A. Bähler, *Reïncarnatie en karma. Twee preeken* (Oosterwolde 1903); *Het “christelijke” barbarendom in Europa* (Blaricum 1903). This last publication was a translation from German, which Bähler provided with a preface. A reception history is given in: Jansen, “‘Een stofopjagend gezel’”. A paraphrase of Bähler’s thoughts is given in: C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Christendom en boeddhisme’, *De Hervorming* 1905-29 (22 July 1905), 225-226.

<sup>65</sup> C.N. Impeta, *Kaart van kerkelijk Nederland* (Kampen 1961), 55.

<sup>66</sup> Both *Het “christelijke” barbarendom in Europa* and *Reïncarnatie en karma* received negative reviews in *De Hervorming*. See: H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Een proeve van boeddhistische zending’, *De Hervorming* 1903-19 (9 May 1903), 146-147; I.M.J. Hoog, ‘Leestafel – “Reïncarnatie en karma”’, *Ibid.* 1904-06 (6 February 1904), 46.

<sup>67</sup> “...dat menig moderne heimelijk niet ongaarne van zulk een wonderlijk gezel, die hun zaak compromitteert, zou worden verlost.” Quoted from: [A.W. Bronsveld in:] C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Leestafel – “Geestelijke wasdom”’, *Ibid.* 1905-51 (23 December 1905), 405-406, there 406.

<sup>68</sup> The tolerant attitude the NPB was formally – that is, on the basis of its own articles of association – obliged to adopt in the purely hypothetical matter of a Buddhist who applied for membership became proverbial for the generous admittance policy of the NPB. In 1920, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the NPB, a satirical article was published in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* in which the proverbial Buddhist was thanked for not joining the NPB. Whenever identity issues were brought up for discussion in a church denomination or religious association, this anonymous article writer stated, the proverbial Buddhist was dragged into the discussion by head and shoulders as a warning against an all too generous admittance policy of individuals who did not identify as ‘Christians’. According to the article writer, this had been the case during a discussion on an amendment of the articles of association of the NPB at the annual NPB meeting held several years before in Rotterdam. (The article writer was mistaken here. The discussion referred to was held at the 1909 NPB meeting in Enschede; the meeting in Rotterdam was held in 1908. By the way, the minutes of the 1909 NPB meeting do not confirm what the article writer claimed.) Fortunately for the NPB, the proverbial Buddhist never did announce itself. After all, had the NPB refused to accept him, then part of its membership would have seceded. By contrast, had the NPB welcomed him with open arms, then it would have been accused of renouncing Christianity and might have alienated another part of its membership. See: ‘Kerknieuws – Ned. Protestant Bond’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVII.298 (27 October 1920), evening paper B, 2. In response, G. Hulsman felt that the article writer in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant*, notwithstanding his satirical turn of phrase, raised a matter upon which thorough reflection was needed. Would the NPB, if push came to shove, really grant NPB membership to someone who identified as a Buddhist instead of as a Christian? Although he was not bursting for welcoming a Buddhist in the NPB, H.U. Meyboom answered that a Buddhist, or a Jew or Mohammedan for that matter, should not be kept out. He referred to the decision with which the Krijthe controversy, mentioned in the third

In fact, in the 1910s, when the rise of the vvH and the ‘ecclesial turn’ challenged the position of the NPB in modernist circles, voices were raised that urged the NPB to fully incorporate the little religions in the modernist movement.<sup>69</sup> By focusing more on *buitenkerkelijke vroomheid*, meaning religious life outside of the churches, than it had done so far, the NPB could show that it still had a reason to exist. Those suggesting that the NPB draw the little religions more tightly into its orbit argued that confessionalism was just as big of a threat to the adherents of these religions as it was to modernists and that the former thus belonged in the movement of the latter. As the name ‘*Protestantenbond*’ might give rise to the misunderstanding that its membership was restricted to Protestants in an ecclesial sense instead of open to everyone with a Protestant ‘attitude of mind’, the NPB should increase its efforts to make clear that its “doors [were] wide open” indeed.<sup>70</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, who is quoted here, thus encouraged the NPB not to wait for little religionists to knock on its doors, but to proactively reach out to them.

In 1916, the dissension between those modernists who were of the same mind as Van der Hoeve, and those who were not, severely clashed. At the general NPB assembly held that year, A.E.F. Junod lectured that if the modernist movement wanted to have a future, the NPB had to not make a stand against the little religions. To make modernists more acquainted with the realm of thought to which these religions gave expression, it was decided that a brochure on Spiritism would be issued under the auspices of the NPB. Those who disagreed with Junod loudly protested, fearing that such a brochure was meant to get into Spiritists’ good books. Probably to reassure them, P. Eldering, who had been shown not to refrain from criticising Spiritism before, was asked to write the brochure. This, in turn, irritated those who did agree with Junod: they objected that the NPB should not publish a brochure in which Spiritism would be put in a bad light.<sup>71</sup> Their

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chapter, had been solved in the 1870s: if an individual could reconcile NPB membership with his or her conscience, then others should respect that. Hulsman was not satisfied with that answer: did the name ‘Association of *Protestants*’ not imply that NPB members had to put Christianity above every other religion? Meyboom closed the discussion by arguing that the NPB would get onto thin ice if it would try to specify the term ‘Protestant’. As such, he reiterated the old-school modernist conviction that having a Protestant ‘attitude of mind’ was not the prerogative of members of church denominations rooted in the Reformation. See: G. Hulsman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De Boeddhist’, *De Hervorming* 1920-45 (13 November 1920), 178; H.U. Meyboom, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Een Buddhist in den Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* 1920-47 (27 November 1920), 187; G. Hulsman, ‘Ingezonden’, *Ibid.* 1920-48 (4 December 1920), 191; H.U. Meyboom, ‘Ingezonden’, *Ibid.* 1920-49 (11 December 1920), 195.

As Poorthuis writes, Buddhism helped to shape the ‘eclectic’ religious identity of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam. According to its pastor P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., Buddhism should be treated similarly to Christianity: everything of value in Buddhism, or any other religion for that matter, could just as well be a source of edification as the elements of truth in Christianity. See: M.J.H.M. Poorthuis, ‘Boeddha als toetssteen voor de religieuze identiteit. Het debat binnen de Vrije Gemeente van 1878-1903’, *Documentatieblad voor de Nederlandse Kerkgeschiedenis na 1800* XXXIII.72 (June 2010), 5-27. Views on Buddhism among several modern theologians are given in: M.J.H.M. Poorthuis and T.A.M. Salemink, *Lotus in de Lage Landen. De geschiedenis van het boeddhisme in Nederland: beeldvorming van 1840 tot heden* (Almere 2009).

<sup>69</sup> E.g.: K., ‘Berichten, enz. – Geestelijk leven’, *De Hervorming* 1912-13 (30 March 1912), 100-101, there 101; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Redactioneel – Ter voorkoming van misverstand’, *Ibid.* 1917-34 (25 August 1917), 280.

<sup>70</sup> “*De deuren wijd open!*” Quoted from: A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – De deuren wijd open!’, *Ibid.* 1918-06 (9 February 1918), 23. See also: Van der Hoeve, *Het werk van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond*, 12-14. It was no coincidence that particularly Van der Hoeve urged the NPB to seek more contact with occultists; as Jansen suggests, Van der Hoeve felt some attraction to Spiritism. See: Jansen, ‘Ds. Adriaan Hendrik van der Hoeve’.

<sup>71</sup> Van Loenen Martinet, who was not an outspoken Spiritist, even accused Eldering of seeing Spiritism as his “private hunting ground” (“*privaat jachtterrein*”). Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] P. Eldering, ‘Ingezonden – Het spiritisme in de laatste algemeene vergadering van den Protestantenvond’, *De Hervorming* 1916-48 (25 November 1916), 421-422, there 421.

objections were rejected, which indicated that they were in the minority.<sup>72</sup> Eldering could not understand what all the fuss was about: ten years earlier, he recalled, the NPB had issued a brochure in which Mennonite minister P.B. Westerdijk (1869-1954) pointed out flaws in Theosophy. Why then, he asked, should the NPB treat Spiritists with kid gloves?<sup>73</sup>

Eldering completed his brochure several months later. In it, he reiterated that modernists should best ignore Spiritism, as long as its epistemological basis remained unstable. Eldering again took issue with Spiritists' on the latter's claim that Spiritism was scientific. Séances did not prove anything about the immortality of the soul. Moreover, the existence of an afterlife was a matter of faith in modernism, while it was a matter of science in Spiritism.<sup>74</sup> J.J. Bleeker recognised that this was indeed what distinguished modernism from the little religions. He accordingly believed that most individuals were attracted to Spiritism to have the certainty that they would live on after death, not because they longed for an eternal communion with God. The appeal of Theosophy, he added, was in its detailed system of doctrines that tried to explain even the smallest aspects of reality, a feature it shared with neo-Calvinism. Nonetheless, Bleeker was not against attempts to tighten the bonds between modernists and the adherents of little religions: although the psyche of the latter might differ from that of the former, it could be beneficial to both if they came to know each other better.<sup>75</sup> J. Lindeboom, however, doubted this; the modernist movement could grow numerically by giving little religionists the glad eye, but would it also grow in quality, he rhetorically asked?<sup>76</sup>

H.G. van Wijngaarden answered that question in the affirmative. In October 1918, he suggested the founding of a federation combining organisations embedded in the modernist movement and associations affiliated to the little religions.<sup>77</sup> By joining forces, Van Wijngaarden expected that those religious individuals who were neither Roman Catholic nor orthodox Protestant could make themselves better heard and could consequently exert more influence in social life.<sup>78</sup> His proposal was thus explicitly meant to challenge the position of those religious communities that set the tone in Dutch society and politics at the time. In addition, he hoped that a closer alliance of modernists and other 'religious liberals' could be a foreshadowing of 'the church of the future'.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond', *Provinciale Overijsselsche en Zwolsche Courant* 1916.250 (24 October 1916), 9.

<sup>73</sup> P. Eldering, 'Ingezonden – Het spiritisme in de laatste algemeene vergadering van den Protestantenbond', *De Hervorming* 1916-48 (25 November 1916), 421-422, there 421.

<sup>74</sup> Eldering, *Het hedendaagsch spiritisme*, 168-190; Noordegraaf, *P. Eldering*, 30.

<sup>75</sup> J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Wat mankeert er toch aan ons?', *De Hervorming* 1917-05 (3 February 1917), 35-36, there 35.

<sup>76</sup> J. Lindeboom, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Gedachten uit en over Rome', *Ibid.* 1920-07 (21 February 1920), 25.

<sup>77</sup> [H.G. van Wijngaarden], 'De kerk der toekomst', *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* 1.9 (1918), 1-11. See also: 'Kerknieuws – De kerk der toekomst', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXV.330 (28 November 1918), evening paper A, 1; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – Een wensch', *De Hervorming* 1919-03 (18 January 1919), 10-11; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Kerkelijk leven – Federatie', *Ibid.* 1919-06 (8 February 1919), 23; [H.G. van Wijngaarden], 'De kerk der toekomst', *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* II (1919), 2-9, 30-31.

<sup>78</sup> This was repeated during the meeting that Van Wijngaarden convened on 6 February 1919. See: 'Kerknieuws – Vergadering inzake kerk-organisatie', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVI.37 (7 February 1919), evening paper B, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Van Wijngaarden, 'De kerk der toekomst'. This was a reiteration of some of the founders of the Dutch League of Protestants, who had initially hoped that the NPB would develop into 'the faith community of the future'.

On 6 February 1919, Van Wijngaarden convened a meeting to discuss his suggestion.<sup>80</sup> Several modernists attended the meeting on behalf of the VVH, the NPB, the Free Congregation, the Remonstrant Brotherhood, the General Mennonite Society and the General Association of Liberal Lutherans. In addition, three other groups largely consisting of modernists were separately represented: the so-called ‘Woodbrookers’ and religious socialists, both of whom are dealt with in chapter 7, and members of the *Godsdienstig-Democratische Kring* (Religious Democratic Circle), zoomed in on in chapter 9. Theosophists, liberal Jews and members of the Old Catholic Church were present as well. Van Wijngaarden justified the absence of Spiritists and members of *De Nieuwe Gedachte* by arguing that the former could not all be counted among religious liberals, while the latter refrained from identifying as ‘religious’ in the first place.<sup>81</sup> The outcome of the meeting was twofold. First, it was decided that neither the Free Congregation, nor the NPB could turn into the federation that Van Wijngaarden envisioned, because history had given them “a character that is too specific, a cachet that is too idiosyncratic.”<sup>82</sup> Religious liberals who were no modernists would feel that they were playing second fiddle in an existing organisation with a marked modernist character, whereas the denominational groups of modernists were not willing to federate within the framework of an organisation with which they more and more experienced a conflict of interests. Those aspiring after the incorporation of the little religions into the NPB, of whom Van der Hoeve was the most prominent example, were obviously disappointed with the decision, but reconciled themselves to it nonetheless: within an entirely new federation, they expected that the NPB would still be able to exert influence on religious life outside of the churches.<sup>83</sup> Second, it was decided to install a committee charged with the task of coming up with detailed plans.<sup>84</sup> Several weeks later, this committee presented draft regulations and a declaration of intent: by organising conferences, making joint public appearances and encouraging all groups involved to write in each other’s magazines, the federation-to-be intended to create permanent interrelationships between all ‘non-dogmatic’ communities of faith and to permeate society and culture with the principles of ‘free religiosity’ – whatever these principles might be.<sup>85</sup>

A first *Congres van vrij-religieusen* (Free Religious Congress) was held in May 1919. Due to discontent with their absence at the meeting held three months earlier, Spiritists were represented this time. The same went for freemasons. Anti-atheist association ‘*De Middaghoogte*’ (‘The Meridian’), the name of which was an allusion to freethinkers’ club ‘*De Dageraad*’ (‘The Dawn’), had been invited and willing to send representatives to the congress as well, but had

<sup>80</sup> The reactions Van Wijngaarden’s proposal engendered in NPB circles were diverse. A.C. Schade van Westrum and F. Dijkema were favourable to the idea, whereas a certain ‘J.B.R.’ stated in *De Hervorming* to see the whole endeavour as something ‘meaningless’ and ‘idle’. See: A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Een wensch’, *De Hervorming* 1919-03 (18 January 1919), 10-11; F. Dijkema, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Federatie’, *Ibid.* 1919-08 (22 February 1919), 30-31; J.B.R., ‘Kerkelijk leven – Federatie van zedelijk-religieusen’, *Ibid.* 1919-08 (22 February 1919), 31.

<sup>81</sup> [H.G. van Wijngaarden], ‘De federatie vrijreligieuze groepen en organisaties’, *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* II (1919), 42-47, there 44-45.

<sup>82</sup> “...een te bepaald karakter, een te eigenaardig cachet...” Quoted from: A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Federatie’, *De Hervorming* 1919-06 (8 February 1919), 23.

<sup>83</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Een misverstand’, *Ibid.* 1919-10 (8 March 1919), 39.

<sup>84</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Federatie’, *Ibid.* 1919-06 (8 February 1919), 23.

<sup>85</sup> H.G. van Wijngaarden, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Ontwerp-statuten van de federatie van vrije-religieuze groepen en organisaties’, *Ibid.* 1919-12 (22 March 1919), 46-47.

not been able to do so.<sup>86</sup> Yet, contrary to the involvement of these new groups, the Old Catholic Church, the Woodbrookers and the *Godsdienstig-Democratische Kring*, all of which had been represented at the meeting in February, had withdrawn from the federation-to-be, apparently feeling that its aims were too vague or fearing that it would erode their autonomy. At the congress, A.C. Schade van Westrum seized the opportunity to address modernists who continued to argue that a federation for the promotion of religious liberalism already existed in the form of the NPB.<sup>87</sup> Although the NPB, he substantiated, was formally open to anyone, it had never been able to attract large numbers of non-churchgoing individuals, while the religious services held in its branches were no different from those held in church congregations.<sup>88</sup> In light of the ‘ecclesial turn’ analysed in chapter 4, it is meaningful to note that Schade van Westrum depicted the NPB as an association with strong ‘church-like’ features. Those features, as argued in that same chapter, ultimately caused the NPB to lose its central position in the modernist movement. What is more, as implied in Schade van Westrum’s words, they also caused non-modernist ‘religious liberals’ not to accept the NPB as federative body.

Van Wijngaarden and K.F. Proost wished that the federation-to-be would accelerate the disintegration of the Dutch Reformed Church, as the current ecclesial situation hindered both liberal Protestantism and orthodoxy from developing.<sup>89</sup> Those words met with approval in the orthodox press: if modernists would tighten their bonds with adherents of little religions, they might become convinced that it was best for them to leave the Dutch Reformed Church after all.<sup>90</sup> In vvH circles, however, Van Wijngaarden’s and Proost’s words caused anxiety: the ideal of the *volkskerk* conflicted with the hope for a disintegration of the Dutch Reformed Church. After the first *Congres van vrij-religieusen*, the vvH therefore decided not to join the federation-to-be.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Whereas *De Dageraad* claimed that religion was opposed to, and falsified by, logic, *De Middaghoogte*, founded in 1904, propagated exactly the opposite. See: H. Westra, ‘Dageraad en Middaghoogte’, *De Stroom* I.9 (11 February 1922), 2.

<sup>87</sup> E.g.: Meiling Amshoff, ‘Ingezonden – Bond of federatie?’, *De Hervorming* 1919-23 (7 June 1919), 98. In this same issue, Schade van Westrum and Van der Hoeve answered those who thought a federation of free religious groups and organisations already existed in the form of the NPB. Van der Hoeve explained why this was a misconception. Although not in principle, the NPB was a liberal Protestant organisation in practice, which meant that those Theosophists and Spiritists who were no liberal Protestants, as well as liberal Jews and members of the Old Catholic Church, could not associate themselves with the NPB. See: A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Ingezonden – Bond of federatie?’, *Ibid.* 1919-23 (7 June 1919), 98; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Verscheidenheden en mededeelingen’, *Ibid.* 1919-23 (7 June 1919), 99. However, the NPB had always claimed there was no obstacle whatsoever for liberal non-Protestants to join the NPB, as it had always defined ‘Protestant’ in terms of ‘liberty of conscience’. Even more striking: Van der Hoeve had stated several weeks before that the NPB was indeed broad enough to contain adherents of ‘little religions’. See: ‘Kerknieuws – Vergadering inzake kerk-organisatie’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVI.37 (7 February 1919), evening paper B, 2.

<sup>88</sup> ‘Kerknieuws – Congres religieuze federatie’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCII.29526 (30 May 1919), evening paper, 10.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.* See also: A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Een misverstand’, *De Hervorming* 1919-10 (8 March 1910), 39.

<sup>90</sup> J.J. Knap, ‘Uit het rijke leven – Vrij-religieusen’, *Oude Paden* 1919-27 (6 June 1919), 285-286. See also: ‘Uit de pers’, *De Waarheidsvriend* X.28 (13 June 1919), 3; X.29 (20 June 1919), 3-4. The creation of a federation for the advancement of free religiosity did not escape the notice of the Roman Catholic press either. In *Studiën*, the whole endeavour was observed with amazement. Jesuit Isidoor Vogels (1860-1929) questioned whether a federation that wanted to unite different groups and simultaneously wanted to preserve the singularity of these groups would be viable. See: I. Vogels, ‘Mededeelingen – Vreemdsoortig streven naar religieuze eenheid’, *Studiën* LI.91 (1919), 489-493; I. Vogels, ‘Mededeelingen – Hemelvaartsdag in de Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam’, *Ibid.* LI.92 (1919), 172-177.

<sup>91</sup> A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De federatie’, *De Hervorming* 1919-41 (11 October 1919), 184; [H.G. van Wijngaarden], ‘Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties’, *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* II (1919), 120-124.

The official constitutive meeting of the Federation of Free Religious Groups and Organisations was held in November 1919. Yet, with four potential participants standing aloof – the Old Catholic Church, the Woodbrookers, the *Godsdienstig-Democratische Kring* and the VVH –, the attempt of the federation to unite the modernist movement, the little religions and other forms of religious liberalism under the flag of ‘free religiosity’ had already failed. There was little enthusiasm for the aims of the federation, which were generally seen as ‘too vague’,<sup>92</sup> and no consensus as to which groups were included in the term ‘free religiosity’.<sup>93</sup> For instance, the leader of *De Nieuwe Gedachte*, which Van Wijngaarden wanted to involve in the federation, felt not to belong among ‘free religious’ groups and even denied Spiritists and Theosophists the right to call themselves ‘religious’ at all.<sup>94</sup> In 1920, the federation did not show any activity.<sup>95</sup> A second *Congres van vrij-religieusen* was organised in the spring of 1921, which was intended to breathe new life into the federation, but actually sealed its fate: at the congress a motion was adopted that urged modernists to tighten their bonds *without* the involvement of the adherents of little religions.<sup>96</sup> After this congress, the federation faded away.

Next to the Free Religious Federation, another attempt to bring occultists and modernists closer together was made by *De Hervorming*. In 1919, the weekly gave adherents of little religions the opportunity to explain the essence of their faith.<sup>97</sup> This gesture met with opposition; some questioned whether the modernist movement would receive a qualitative impulse with the influx of adherents of little religions.<sup>98</sup> Hille Ris Lambers stated to regard such criticism as narrow-mindedness: science, he felt, had proven that occult phenomena indeed existed, yet modernists closed their eyes to them.<sup>99</sup> Legitimising the attention paid to occultism in *De Hervorming*, then editorial board member M.C. van Mourik Broekman argued that the little religions should not be rejected in advance; although their epistemology might be unsound, they should be valued

<sup>92</sup> A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Het federatieplan’, *De Hervorming* 1919-20 (17 May 1919), 83; L.N. de Jong, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De grondslag der federatie’, *Ibid.* 1919-26 (28 June 1919), 112-113, there 112; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 101.

<sup>93</sup> Where the line was drawn between the unspecified terms ‘free religiosity’ and ‘orthodoxy’ was rather arbitrary: as stated in the articles of the federation, groups could only join the federation *by invitation*. See: H.G. van Wijngaarden, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Ontwerp-statuten van de federatie van vrije-religieuze groepen en organisaties’, *De Hervorming* 1919-12 (22 March 1919), 46-47, there 47. Accordingly, those groups present at the preparatory meeting in January 1919 and the first congress in May 1919 had been invited to be present by Van Wijngaarden.

<sup>94</sup> K. Meijer, ‘De kerk der toekomst’, *Het Nieuwe Leven* V (1919), 1-8. See also: K.F. Proost, ‘Uit de tijdschriften’, *De Hervorming* 1919-23 (7 June 1919), 98; [H.G. van Wijngaarden], ‘Het geloof der toekomst’, *Nieuwe Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* II (1919), 105-111; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Hoofdartikel – De federatie-gedachte’, *De Hervorming* 1921-17 (30 April 1921), 129-130, there 129.

<sup>95</sup> Between its first congress and its constitutive meeting, the federation did not show much activity either, even causing the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* to doubt whether the federation’s first congress had also been its last and only congress. Referred to in: ‘Kerkelijk leven – De tweede algemeene vergadering der Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties’, *Ibid.* 1919-47 (22 November 1919), 214.

<sup>96</sup> W.J. Wegerif, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Het tweede federatiecongres’, *Ibid.* 1921-19 (14 May 1921), 149-150; ‘Godsdienstig leven – 2<sup>e</sup> congres van de Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties’, *De Telegraaf* XXIX.11188 (7 May 1921), evening paper, 10.

<sup>97</sup> ‘Ingezonden’, *De Hervorming* 1919-16 (19 April 1919), 63.

<sup>98</sup> A.H. Blaauw, ‘Ingezonden’, *Ibid.* 1919-16 (19 April 1919), 63; J.W. van der Linden, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Rubini en wat daarmee samenhangt’, *Ibid.* 1919-38 (20 September 1919), 166; 1919-39 (27 September 1919), 171-172; M. van de Poel, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing’, *Ibid.* 1919-43 (25 October 1919), 191-192; C.A. Weersma-van Duin, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De artikelen van dr. Van Mourik Broekman’, *Ibid.* 1919-44 (1 November 1919), 197-198.

<sup>99</sup> C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Is dat nu modern?’, *Ibid.* 1919-43 (25 October 1919), 191.



for broadening people's outlook on life and hence enriching people's lives, and for penetrating the deepest levels of reality.<sup>100</sup> However, due to the criticism mentioned above, the editors of *De Hervorming* felt compelled to retrace their steps after several months.<sup>101</sup>

As both this failed attempt of *De Hervorming* – an example of the magazine's agency in liberal Protestant circles – and the history of the Free Religious Federation show, the enthusiasm for attempts to incorporate the little religions into the modernist movement was low. Someone such as Eldering evidently had more sympathisers among modernists than someone such as Van Wijngaarden. The motion adopted at the second *Congres van vrij-religieusen* evinced that the need for closer collaboration was recognised in modernist circles in the early 1920s, but on a small liberal Protestant rather than on a much larger 'free religious' basis. Among modernists, the fear was too great that modernists' own colours would fade too much in a body as varicoloured and heterogeneous as the Free Religious Federation.<sup>102</sup> The intention expressed in the motion was finally carried out in 1923, when the CC came into being.<sup>103</sup> Afterwards, voices advocating the incorporation of the little religions into the modernist movement could hardly be heard anymore. In the 1920s, interest in the little religions declined in society at large,<sup>104</sup> silencing those voices even further.

#### 4. Potential Fellow Reform Movements

In the modernist press, attention was not only paid to Spiritism, Theosophy and other little religions, but also to seemingly 'liberal' tendencies in Roman Catholicism and orthodox

<sup>100</sup> M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Opleving van occultisme', *Ibid.* 1919-39 (27 September 1919), 172-173; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Waarheid in het occultisme', *Ibid.* 1919-40 (4 October 1919), 177-178; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Waarde in het occultisme', *Ibid.* 1919-41 (11 October 1919), 181-182; 1919-42 (18 October 1919), 187-188; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing', *Ibid.* 1919-44 (1 November 1919), 198.

<sup>101</sup> In 1928, the editors of *De Stroom* made a similar gesture as those of *De Hervorming* by complying to the request of the Dutch 'First Church of Christ, Scientist' to publish several lectures in its columns twice. They did so, as they explained, because Christian Science was different from, yet not completely unrelated to, liberal Protestantism. Moreover, it would go against the religiously tolerant spirit that characterised liberal Protestantism if they rejected this request. They were even pleased that the board of the Dutch First Church of Christ, Scientist had sent its request to *De Stroom* and not to another magazine, seeing this as an acknowledgement of the tolerant spirit of liberal Protestantism. See: 'Inlegblad', *De Stroom* VII.19 (14 April 1928); VII.50 (17 November 1928).

<sup>102</sup> This became manifest during the second congress of the federation, held in May 1921. As said, one of the decisions made at this congress was that attempts should be made to formalise relationships within the liberal Protestant community – that is, without the participation of organisations of Spiritists, Theosophists, etc. See: W.J. Wegerif, 'Kerkelijk leven – Het tweede federatiecongres', *De Hervorming* 1921-19 (14 May 1921), 149-150; 'Godsdienstig leven – 2<sup>e</sup> congres van de Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *De Telegraaf* XXIX.11188 (7 May 1921), evening paper, 10. With this decision, the federation basically signed its own death warrant: it urged liberal Protestants to tighten their bonds, excluding the adherents of little religions.

<sup>103</sup> In retrospect, Remonstrant minister W. Mackenzie (1889-1973) attributed the failure of the 'free religious federation' that Van Wijngaarden had initiated to the tepidity of the groups involved and the broad set-up of the whole endeavour. The attempt to federate groups with such diverse profiles as those invited by Van Wijngaarden had been rather 'artificial', due to a lack of true 'spiritual unity': the federation could have only succeeded if all groups involved had already 'organically' grown towards each other. Mackenzie argued that the required 'spiritual unity' did exist among those groups with an explicit liberal Protestant basis. He therefore considered the CC to be a – successful, small-scale – reanimation of the Free Religious Federation. The latter had thus, indirectly, laid the foundations of the CC. See: W. Mackenzie, 'Wat aan de orde is – De federatieve gedachte', *Amsterdamsch Bijblad van De Stroom* VIII.6 (12 January 1929), 1; VIII.8 (26 January 1929), 1; VIII.9 (2 February 1929), 1; VIII.10 (9 February 1929), 1; VIII.11 (16 February 1929), 1; VIII.12 (23 February 1929), 1.

<sup>104</sup> F. Dijkema, *Buitenkerkelijke stroomingen. Spiritisme, Theosofie, Christian Science, Orde van de Ster in het Oosten* (Amsterdam s.a.), 30-32.

Protestantism, in religions other than Christianity and in the field of education. The reason for this was twofold. First, just as were the little religions, these tendencies were viewed as ‘signs of the times’, evincing that new ways to give meaning to life and to make sense of reality were being sought. Second, it was hoped that these tendencies might develop into potential fellow reform movements, allies in modernists’ endeavour to counteract confessionality.

A first expression of a ‘liberal’ spirit in Catholicism with which modernists were confronted was the so-called ‘Old Catholic movement’, emerging in the 1870s. Opposing the decision taken at the First Vatican Council in 1870 to turn papal infallibility into a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, groups of priests and laypeople, primarily in German-speaking Europe, determined to sever their ties with Rome. They sought alliance with the Old Catholic Church of Utrecht, which had already seceded from the Roman Catholic Church in the eighteenth century, and founded new Old Catholic congregations.<sup>105</sup> In modernist circles, as A. Pierson noticed, this development was interpreted as a sign of progress, even as the potential breakthrough of modernist principles in the Catholic world.<sup>106</sup> That expectation seemed realistic at first. After all, those who became Old Catholic did so out of opposition to ultramontanism. They reformed the Catholic liturgy by using vernacular languages instead of Latin in their church services, and separated priesthood and celibacy. Yet, as early as the mid-1870s, it turned out that the Old Catholic movement did not come up to modernists’ expectations: the movement left most doctrines of the Church of Rome intact, remaining merely ‘Catholicism without a pope’ and lacking a clear vision.<sup>107</sup> As a result, modernists’ interest in it evaporated after 1880.<sup>108</sup>

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, liberal Protestants became aware of new liberal tendencies in Catholic circles, this time not in the form of a secessionist movement, but in the form of a group of theologians who had no intention of leaving the Church of Rome. Their theological reform programme was known as ‘Catholic modernism’ and had the same intention as Protestant modernism: harmonising Christianity, in this case in its Roman Catholic shape, with contemporary science, philosophy and culture.<sup>109</sup> Catholic and Protestant modernism

<sup>105</sup> For a detailed account of the late nineteenth-century Old Catholic movement, see the series: *The Old Catholic Reform Movements on the Continent* (all volumes were issued in London in 1889, except for the tenth volume, which was issued in 1890): R.S. Oldham, I. *What Old Catholicism is*; F. Meyrick, II. *Old Catholicism in Italy*; R.S. Oldham, III-IV. *Old Catholicism in Germany*; F. Meyrick, V-VI. *Old Catholicism in Switzerland*; R.S. Oldham, VII. *Old Catholicism in Austria*; F. Meyrick, VIII-IX. *Old Catholicism in France*; R.S. Oldham, X. *The Old Catholic Church of Holland*.

<sup>106</sup> A. Pierson, ‘Roomsche of Germaansche pausen?’, *De Hervorming* 1873-36 (4 September 1873), 2-3, there 3. Pierson himself did not regard it as such. See also: ‘Buitenland – Spanje’, *Ibid.* 1873-01 (2 January 1873), 3-4, there 3; ‘De toekomst der katholieke christenheid’, *Ibid.* 1873-38 (18 September 1873), 2; J. Hooykaas Herderscheê et al., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Bluscht den Geest niet uit’, *Ibid.* 1885-10 (7 March 1885), 40.

<sup>107</sup> E.g.: A.F. Mackensteen, ‘Kroniek’, *Ibid.* 1874-19 (7 May 1874), 1-2; ‘Buitenland – Zwitserland’, *Ibid.* 1874-38 (17 September 1874), 4; 1875-09 (4 March 1875), 4; ‘Mededeelingen en berichten’, *Ibid.* 1876-02 (13 January 1876), 3-4; [N.C. Balsem], ‘Buitenland’, *Ibid.* 1877-04 (27 January 1877), 3; ‘Buitenland’, *Ibid.* 1879-49 (6 December 1879), 195; 1884-44 (1 November 1884), 178; 1890-38 (20 September 1890), 151-152.

<sup>108</sup> *De Hervorming*, and other Dutch periodicals as well, paid particular attention to the French priest C.J.M. Loyson (1827-1912), known as ‘father Hyacinthe’. Loyson, who sympathised with the Old Catholic movement for a while, had a rather ambivalent relationship with liberal Protestantism. See, e.g.: ‘Buitenland – Pater Hyacinthe te Straatsburg’, *Ibid.* 1877-08 (24 February 1877), 2-3; ‘De oud-katholieken’, *Ibid.* 1894-44 (3 November 1894), 175.

<sup>109</sup> O. Weiß, ‘Der katholische Modernismus’, in: H. Wolf (ed.), *Antimodernismus und Modernismus in der katholischen Kirche. Beiträge zur theologiegeschichtlichen Vorfeld des II. Vatikanums* (Paderborn etc. 1998), 107-139, there 117-121; L. Kenis and E.G.E. van der Wall, ‘Catholic and Protestant Modernisms. A Call for a Comparative Approach’, in: Kenis and Van der Wall (eds.), *Religious Modernism in the Low Countries*, 1-22, there 11.

indeed resembled one another.<sup>110</sup> There was reluctance to be open about this congeniality among Catholic modernists, as they would otherwise call upon themselves the suspicion of being ‘crypto-Protestants’, but not among liberal Protestants. In *De Hervorming*, particular attention was paid to the opposition met in papal circles by Catholic modernists such as Alfred Loisy (1857-1940) and George Tyrrell (1861-1909). In a series of articles on the latter, published in 1908, H. de Lang applauded Tyrrell’s plea to interpret Catholic dogmas more in accordance with historical-critical biblical studies and contemporary scientific knowledge.<sup>111</sup> Yet, it was an illusion to think that the Vatican would go along with that, as in Roman Catholic theology the form and content of dogmas were inseparable. Without realising this, De Lang now used an argument with which orthodox Protestants reinforced their claim that modernists had no right to be in church life; if Tyrrell could no longer accept official Catholic doctrines, De Lang argued, he should do the only logical thing: leaving the Roman Catholic Church – and joining the ranks of liberal Protestants, among whom he would have “an honoured place.”<sup>112</sup> Later in 1908, De Lang noted that Cardinal Mercier (1851-1926), the then influential archbishop of Mechelen, considered Tyrrell’s modernism to be a remnant of a Protestant upbringing.<sup>113</sup> Although Tyrrell himself, who had indeed been raised a Protestant, rejected this claim, De Lang firmly agreed with Mercier.<sup>114</sup> More than a decade later, Dominican J.H.H. Sassen (1876-1944) expressed himself in similar terms as Mercier by asserting that Catholic modernism was deeply infected with liberal Protestant theology.<sup>115</sup> These examples illustrate that both anti-modernist Catholics and modernist Protestants were keen to link Catholic modernism to its Protestant namesake, albeit for different reasons: the former to disqualify it as a Protestant ‘heresy’, a judgement the papacy formalised in 1910, and the latter to prove that their theology was penetrating into Catholicism.

Next to developments that seemed driven by a ‘liberal’ approach to Catholic theology and ecclesiology, potential manifestations of liberal-mindedness within orthodox Protestantism were also eagerly kept track of in the modernist press. As shown in chapter 3, quite some effort was made in modernist circles to ‘expose’ neo-Calvinism, arguably the most influential current within early twentieth-century Dutch Protestantism, as a fundamental break with Calvinist orthodoxy. Particularly in the 1910s, studies appeared in which neo-Calvinism was claimed to be actually imbued with essentially modern or liberal theological maxims. At the end of this decade, it even seemed that a ‘liberal’ movement began to emerge in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, the ecclesial embodiment of neo-Calvinism. In 1917, for example, neo-Calvinist minister J.B. Netelenbos (1879-1934) acted counter to several articles of the Belgic Confession,

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-22. As Van der Wall states, a thorough comparison between Roman Catholic and Protestant modernism still needs to be written. See: E.G.E. van der Wall, ‘Protestants en rooms-katholiek modernisme: een tragische geschiedenis. Aanzetten tot comparatief onderzoek naar aanleiding van Fredrik Pijper, “Het modernisme en andere stroomingen in de katholieke kerk” (1921)’, in: Mikkers and Smit (eds.), *Tussen Augustinus en atheïsme*, 63-88, there 76.

<sup>111</sup> De Lang based this on articles previously published in *The Hibbert Journal*. See: H. de Lang, ‘Pater Tyrrell en pater Gerard. Pro en contra’, *De Hervorming* 1908-05 (1 February 1908), 33-34, there 33; 1908-06 (8 February 1908), 41-42, there 42.

<sup>112</sup> “*Iemand als Tyrrell zou onder de onzen met eere een plaats innemen.*” Quoted from: H. de Lang, ‘Pater Tyrrell en pater Gerard. Pro en contra’, *Ibid.* 1908-07 (15 February 1908), 49-50, there 50.

<sup>113</sup> P. Allitt, *Catholic Converts. British and American Intellectuals Turn to Rome* (Ithaca and London 1997), 124.

<sup>114</sup> H. de Lang, ‘Buitenland’, *De Hervorming* 1908-37 (12 September 1908), 294. A year earlier, Mennonite minister E.M. ten Cate (1868-1926) had already argued that a Protestant ‘leaven’ was working both in Old Catholicism and Catholic modernism. See: E.M. ten Cate, ‘Geen tusschenvorm’, *Ibid.* 1907-44 (2 November 1907), 347-348.

<sup>115</sup> Van der Wall, ‘Protestants en rooms-katholiek modernisme’, 75.

in conflict with which no minister in the Reformed Churches was allowed to act or preach, by conducting a service in a Dutch Reformed congregation and slightly nuancing the literal word of Scripture. He legitimised his actions by claiming that neo-Calvinism left room for interpretations that deviated from, or were even at odds with, the Belgic Confession at some points.<sup>116</sup> Already in 1915, Netelenbos had taken a remarkable step for a neo-Calvinist by joining the editorial board of the short-lived magazine *Voor Hooger Leven* (*For Higher Life*), in which modernists G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga (1874-1957), A. Klaver (1878-1932) and H.L. Oort (1864-1925) were among his colleagues.<sup>117</sup> In *De Hervorming*, he was accordingly praised for being ‘liberal-spirited’.<sup>118</sup> As modernists noticed, Netelenbos was not the only one in neo-Calvinist circles who showed a liberal spirit: for instance, layman C.M. Buizer (1884-1965) shared his plea not to identify the ‘true church’ mentioned in the Belgic Confession exclusively with the Reformed Churches, while minister H. Jansen (1885-1972) challenged the historicity of the first three chapters of the book of Genesis.<sup>119</sup>

To modernists, these events proved that rigid creedalism and dogmatism more and more came to be experienced as galling bonds in the Reformed Churches, culminating in the mid-1920s in the much media-covered controversy surrounding minister J.G. Geelkerken (1879-1960).<sup>120</sup> While he claimed not to doubt the historicity of Genesis 2 and 3, dealing with the Creation and Fall of man, Geelkerken felt that room should be left in the Reformed Churches to interpret these Scriptural chapters in a more metaphorical way. In 1926, he was called to account at the general synod of the Reformed Churches – in a disciplinary case that was portrayed in the media as revolving around the question of whether the snake in Genesis 2 and 3, due to which Eve and Adam had eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, had spoken in a way ‘perceptible to the senses’.<sup>121</sup> In *De Hervorming*, Mennonite minister H. Bakels (1871-1952)

<sup>116</sup> Netelenbos argued that the neo-Calvinist notion of ‘ecclesial multiformity’, being the idea that the communion of saints did not entirely coincide with one church denomination, made necessary an amendment of the articles dealing with the ‘true church’ in the Belgic Confession. Moreover, he argued that the neo-Calvinist notion of ‘organic Scriptural inspiration’ allowed for an exegesis of Biblical texts in which a clear distinction was made between form and content, laying weight on the human authorship of these texts. See: C.J. de Kruijter, ‘De erfenis niet geweigerd. Ds. Jan Bernard Netelenbos (1879-1934)’, in: D.Th. Kuiper et al. (eds.), *Jaarboek voor de Geschiedenis van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland VI* (1992), 83-129; Kuiper (De Bruijn, De Bruijn and Schutte eds.), *Tussen observatie en participatie*, 131-134.

<sup>117</sup> ‘Leestafel – Een nieuw stichtelijk tijdschrift’, *De Hervorming* 1915-22 (29 May 1915), 195.

<sup>118</sup> ‘Leestafel – “Dat zij allen één zijn!”’, *Ibid.* 1917-33 (18 August 1917), 274; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Boek-aankondiging – “De grond van ons geloof”’, *Ibid.* 1919-31 (2 August 1919), 138.

<sup>119</sup> More examples could be mentioned, such as C. van Gelderen (1872-1945) and C. Veltenaar (1873-1954), but here only the ministers referred to in *De Hervorming* are mentioned. See: S., ‘Kerkelijk leven – Een bezwaarde’, *Ibid.* 1918-01 (5 January 1918), 3; S.A., ‘Verscheidenheden en mededeelingen – Aanteekeningen’, *Ibid.* 1919-19 (10 May 1919), 78-79. See also: H.C. Endedijk, *De Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland I. 1892-1936* (Kampen 1990), 139; M.J. Aalders, ‘Hendrik Jansen (1885-1972) en zijn botsing met de kerkenraad van de Gereformeerde Kerk van Eindhoven’, *Historisch Tijdschrift GKN XX* (December 2010), 3-22.

<sup>120</sup> K.H. Roessingh, ‘Leestafel – Uit de tijdschriften van rechtzinnige zijde’, *De Hervorming* 1917-08 (24 February 1917), 64; [H. de Lang], ‘Redactioneel – De Gereformeerde Kerken en de Ned.-Hervormde Kerk’, *Ibid.* 1917-24 (16 June 1917), 197-198, there 197; H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – De rijpere jeugd’, *Ibid.* 1918-08 (23 February 1918), 30-31, there 31; S.A., ‘Kerkelijk leven – Aanteekeningen’, *Ibid.* 1919-21 (24 May 1919), 87-88; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De Theologische School te Kampen en de cultuur’, *Ibid.* 1920-30 (31 July 1920), 118-119; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Hoofdartikel – Ons calvinistisch volksdeel’, *Ibid.* 1920-46 (20 November 1920), 181-182, there 182; J.E. Post, ‘Eenheid of tegenstelling’, *Ibid.* 1925-27 (4 July 1925), 209-210, there 209.

<sup>121</sup> The build-up to, the synodical involvement with, and the aftermath of, the Geelkerken controversy are extensively dealt with in: G. Harinck (ed.), *De kwestie-Geelkerken. Een terugblik na 75 jaar* (Barneveld 2001); M.J. Aalders, *Heeft de slang gesproken? Het strijdbare leven van dr. J.G. Geelkerken (1879-1960)* (Amsterdam 2013).

and M.C. van Mourik Broekman drew a parallel between the Geelkerken controversy and the so-called ‘Scopes Trial’ of 1925, during which American schoolteacher John T. Scopes (1900-1970) had been brought to court for violating Tennessee law not to teach the theory of evolution at school. In both cases, animals played a central role: a snake in Geelkerken’s case and the proverbial monkey with which Darwin’s theory on the origin of species was mocked in the Scopes Trial. In both cases, the protagonists defended the right to interpret the first chapters of Genesis in a more liberal way than was common in their environment.<sup>122</sup> Drawing a parallel between the two became even more justifiable when the synod of the Reformed Churches gave its verdict in 1926: it condemned Geelkerken’s views and hence gave victory to the same kind of biblicism that had triumphed in the Scopes Trial. Because he did not renounce his views, Geelkerken was forced to leave the Reformed Churches, a fate with which Netelenbos and Jansen had already met several years before. Whereas both of the latter had subsequently joined the Dutch Reformed Church, Geelkerken and his sympathisers brought into being a new church denomination, the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Hersteld Verband* (Reformed Churches in Restored Union). This denomination remained rather small – its membership figure grew from 5,500 in 1926 to 7,200 in 1941, meaning that the Reformed Churches were numerically hardly affected by the decision to condemn Geelkerken’s views –,<sup>123</sup> but that was not what disappointed modernists most about the development of the neo-Calvinist ‘movement of youngsters’, of which Netelenbos and Geelkerken were two of the most prominent representatives.<sup>124</sup> This movement had seemed promising at first glance,<sup>125</sup> but had not developed into a liberal current within neo-Calvinism. Its representatives were not only silenced in the Reformed Churches; they did not become any more liberal-minded afterwards: even the Reformed Churches in Restored Union remained theologically rather orthodox all down the line.<sup>126</sup>

With regard to ‘liberal’ tendencies in religions other than Christianity, particular attention was paid in modernist circles to the Brahmo Samaj movement in Hinduism. Founded in 1828, the Brahmo Samaj criticised the rigid caste system along the lines of which social life was organised in India, pressed for educational reforms and called for women’s rights. The adherents of the movement held Jesus of Nazareth in high esteem as a spiritual-ethical mentor

<sup>122</sup> H. Bakels, ‘Dayton – Amsterdam’, *De Hervorming* 1925-43 (24 October 1925), 341-342; 1925-47 (21 November 1925), 371; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘De kern der kwestie-Geelkerken’, *Ibid.* 1926-12 (20 March 1926), 90-92; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Rondom den kern der kwestie-Geelkerken’, *Ibid.* 1926-13 (27 March 1926), 99-101.

<sup>123</sup> The Reformed Churches in Restored Union merged into the Dutch Reformed Church on 15 May 1946. See: G.F.W. Herngreen, *Een handjevol verkenners. Ontstaan en geschiedenis van het ‘H.V.’, de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland in Hersteld Verband* (Baarn 1976), 44, 158-163.

<sup>124</sup> There is no consensus as to whether Jansen belonged to the ‘movement of youngsters’: Aalders suggests he did, Van Driel claims he did not. See: M.J. Aalders, *Een handjevol verkenners? Het Hersteld Verband opnieuw bekeken* (Barneveld 2012), 11; C.M. van Driel, ‘Weerspanning kerkverbandje’, *Reformatisch Dagblad* XLII.283 (5 March 2013), section ‘Puntkomma’, 11. In any case, as a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, Jansen came to be known as a liberal. Between 1947 and 1951, he was the pastor of the NPB branch in Heemstede. See: Aalders, ‘Hendrik Jansen’, 16.

<sup>125</sup> W. Mackenzie, for example, stated in 1926 to expect that it would lead “not exactly to ‘modernism’, but to free Christianity” (“niet bepaald naar het specifieke ‘modernisme’ – maar naar het vrije Christendom”). [W. Mackenzie in:] ‘Kerknieuws – De zaak-Geelkerken’, *Provinciale Drentsche en Asser Courant* CIII.76 (31 March 1926), 6. J.J. Meyer interpreted the Geelkerken controversy as a sign that modernist principles had gained ground in neo-Calvinist circles. See: J.J. Meyer, ‘Dr. Geelkerken veroordeeld’, *Het Vaderland* (16 March 1926), evening paper A, 1.

<sup>126</sup> E.g.: [B.J. Aris in:] ‘Binnenland’, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* LIII.15998 (20 May 1930), 2.

and deemed the Gospel to be an important source of principles of life,<sup>127</sup> but felt that society and religious practices in India could only be reformed from within Hinduism itself.<sup>128</sup> That did not prevent modernists from seeing the adherents of the Brahmo Samaj as co-religionists: although not calling themselves Christians, the latter were shown to possess a true ‘Protestant’ spirit, in the sense described in chapter 3.<sup>129</sup> In fact, in 1877, J.H. Maronier held the Brahmo Samaj up as an example to the modernist movement. While, as indicated in chapter 2, the NPB was still primarily preoccupied with ecclesial affairs at the time, Maronier brought to his fellow modernists’ attention that the Brahmo Samaj was actively manifesting itself in social life – and not without avail: its moral influence in Indian society at large was much bigger than its numerical strength would suggest. Dutch modernists, Maronier argued, could lean on its adherents.<sup>130</sup>

A movement advocating a revision of established religious views and practices also manifested itself in Judaism, known as liberal, progressive or Reform Judaism. At an abstract level, it bore striking resemblances to liberal Protestantism: both originated in the same country, Germany, at around the same time, in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and both stemmed from a need to adapt to modern times. Yet in the nineteenth-century Netherlands, as historian D. Michman argues, the conditions for liberal Judaism to take root were absent.<sup>131</sup> First, contrary to their co-religionists in Germany, Dutch Jews were not forced to constantly engage in public debates on their position in and loyalty to national society. Second, while Dutch Jewish congregations were theologically and ritualistically officially in line with orthodoxy, they tolerated Jews who adhered less strict to orthodoxy in their midst. And third, in Germany and the United States, mainly middle-class Jews had been shown to be receptive to the idea of modernising Judaism. In the Netherlands, a Jewish ‘bourgeoisie’ only began to emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>132</sup> In view of the central argument of this study, this last observation Michman makes is of particular significance: after all, just as was liberal Judaism, liberal Protestantism was essentially bourgeois. As he made clear in *De Hervorming* in 1903, H. Oort felt that liberal Judaism and liberal Protestantism were not only similar with regard to their socio-economic basis; he argued that the two were basically one and the same – in fact, that Jews who wanted to modernise Judaism had actually become liberal *Christians*. Believing that Jews had to give up everything that was particularly Jewish in order to be liberal, and seeing the freedom of conscience, the rejection of legalism and the notion of free piety that liberal Jews

<sup>127</sup> Unitarianism, the adherents of which modernists regarded as their Anglo-Saxon equivalents, highly influenced the Brahmo Samaj. A detailed account of this influence is given in: D. Kopf, *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (Princeton 1979), 3-41.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 179. See also: J.N. Wiersma, ‘De roeping der modernen’, *De Hervorming* 1881-36 (16 September 1881), 145-146, there 146. [This issue is erroneously numbered as ‘1881-37’.]

<sup>129</sup> In the Dutch context, see, e.g.: ‘Een bijdrage tot de kennis van een merkwaardig man’, *Ibid.* 1876-23 (8 June 1876), 1-2; J.H. Maronier, ‘De theïstische kerk in Indië’, *Ibid.* 1877-20 (19 May 1877), 1-2; H. de Lang, ‘Berichten, enz. – Buitenland’, *Ibid.* 1910-39 (24 September 1910), 310; G. Hulsman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De Boeddhist’, *Ibid.* 1920-45 (13 November 1920), 178; E.G.E. van der Wall, ‘India’s boodschap aan het Westen’, in: C. de Lange and R. Mulder (eds.), *Vijf continenten, vijf eeuwen. Vijfjaar geschiedbeoefening in het Kerkhistorisch Gezelschap S.S.S.* (Leiden 2011), 78-90, there 83-84.

<sup>130</sup> J.H. Maronier, ‘De theïstische kerk in Indië’, *De Hervorming* 1877-21 (26 May 1877), 1-2, there 2.

<sup>131</sup> Yet, as Meyboom remarks, several Jews joined the NPB during the first fifty years of its existence. See: Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenbond*, 5. In 1885, at least one Jew was a member of the branch in Lemsterland. In 1908, two Jews were members of the branch in Doetinchem. See: B., ‘Vraagbus’, *De Hervorming* 1885-10 (7 March 1885), 39; [H. Heetjans in:] *Handelingen NPB 1908*, 38.

<sup>132</sup> D. Michman, *Het liberale Jodendom in Nederland 1929-1943* (Amsterdam 1988), 32-34.

upheld as essentially *Christian* values and ideals, Oort advised liberal-minded Jews to join a (liberal) Christian congregation. There, they would feel more at home than they would ever feel in a synagogue.<sup>133</sup> In 1906, C.E. Hooykaas implied that Oort was right in depicting liberal Judaism as a contradiction in terms. Dutch Jews who were religiously liberal-minded, he perceived, had lost everything by which Judaism distinguished itself. As far as he could see, there were liberal Jews, but a liberal *movement* still did not exist in Dutch Judaism.<sup>134</sup>

However, two years later, this seemed to change. In *De Hervorming*, mention was made of “a movement among Jews in Amsterdam that, as such, bears much resemblance to the one emerging fifty years ago among Protestants and recently among Roman Catholics – nothing more and nothing less than a modernist current.” A “young Jewish preacher” led religious services outside of the synagogue, “digging up the original Mosaic principles that are buried under the rubble of legalism and textualism.” P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. welcomed this development in a sermon in the Free Congregation: finally, he lectured, liberal Jews, of whom he believed there were now thousands in Amsterdam, seemed to join forces.<sup>135</sup> It would nonetheless take another ten years before an attempt was made to organise them indeed. A liberal Jewish journal, *Het Oude Volk* (*The Old People*), was issued as of June 1917, in the circle of which the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnige Joden in Nederland* (Association of Liberal Jews in the Netherlands) was founded in early 1919. The editors of the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* (*New Jewish Weekly*), the leading and orthodox-spirited Jewish opinion magazine in the Netherlands, vehemently attacked the association; they basically agreed with Oort that liberal Judaism implied abandoning all particularities of Judaism. Moreover, they accused the association of sacrificing Judaism to the interests of liberal Protestantism. Their accusation was motivated by the involvement of the association with the Federation of Free Religious Groups and Organisations.<sup>136</sup> On behalf of the liberal Jews, D.I. Cardozo and I.Th. Cohen van Straaten (1868-1931) attended the meeting Van Wijngaarden convened in February 1919 to discuss the founding of this federation. Cohen van Straaten even helped to draw up the articles of the federation-to-be. In the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, he and Cardozo were suspected of inciting Jews “to assimilate into Christianity.” The federation might claim to have an interfaith basis, but was “pre-eminently a Christian gathering of Old Catholics, Dutch Reformed, Lutherans, Mennonites, Remonstrants, etc.”<sup>137</sup> Its founding was initiated by “a Christian minister” and its inaugural meeting was attended by “members of all Christian church denominations.” Even the little religions were essentially Christian, proof of which the editors of the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* found in the glorification of Jesus’s name with which the federation was welcomed in *Theosophia*, the monthly magazine of the Dutch

<sup>133</sup> H. Oort, ‘Een vrijzinnig Jodendom’, *De Hervorming* 1903-19 (9 May 1903), 146; 1903-20 (16 May 1903), 153-154; 1903-21 (23 May 1903), 162.

<sup>134</sup> C.E. Hooykaas, ‘De Joden en de Leidsche Vertaling’, *Ibid.* 1906-23 (9 June 1906), 179.

<sup>135</sup> “...jong Joodsch prediker...”; “de oorspronkelijke Mozaïsche beginselen [...] op te halen van onder het puin van formalisme en letterknechterij.” Quoted from: K., ‘Berichten, enz. – Modern Jodendom’, *Ibid.* 1908-42 (17 October 1908), 332. Michman does not refer to this case.

<sup>136</sup> ‘Binnenland’, *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* LIV.41 (7 March 1919), 2; LIV.42 (14 March 1919), 10; ‘Het hellend vlak’, *Ibid.* LIV.43 (21 March 1919), 1-2; ‘Binnenland’, *Ibid.* LIV.45 (4 April 1919), 2-3; ‘Opruiers’, *Ibid.* LIV.48 (25 April 1919), 1.

<sup>137</sup> “...doen opgaan in de Christenheid.”; “...bij uitstek Christelijke gezelschap van Oud-Katholieken, Hervormden, Lutherschen, Doopsgezinden, Remonstranten enz.” Quoted from: ‘Binnenland’, *Ibid.* LIV.42 (14 March 1919), 10.

Theosophical Association.<sup>138</sup> How could Jews in all sincerity join a federation with such an overt Christian character?<sup>139</sup>

Liberal Jews themselves were apparently concerned about this as well; to joining the federation, they attached the condition that it should abstain from every activity intended to amalgamate Christian church denominations. At the constitutive meeting of the federation, held in November 1919, Cohen van Straaten was elected in the general executive board, even though the condition he had made was seen as an unacceptable infringement on the freedom of action of the federation and therefore rejected.<sup>140</sup> In the *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad*, he was subsequently asked how on earth Jews could still participate in a federation that no longer even hid its exclusive concern for Christian interests?<sup>141</sup> This question remained unanswered. At the time, the Association of Liberal Jews was already languishing. After May 1920, when the final issue of *Het Oude Volk* appeared, nothing was heard of the association anymore. At federation meetings and the second free religious congress held in 1921, it was not represented.<sup>142</sup> Its quick downfall will have undoubtedly been caused by differences of opinion on the course that the association should steer,<sup>143</sup> but it might have had to do with its involvement with the Free Religious Federation as well. It is not unreasonable to assume that liberal-minded Jews who might have felt some sympathy for the association feared that the federation endangered their Jewish identity and accordingly refrained from supporting Cohen van Straaten and Cardozo. A new attempt to organise liberal Jews was only made in the 1930s,<sup>144</sup> when the Free Religious Federation had long become defunct and liberal Protestants were no longer interested in forging an alliance with others.

In modernist circles, there was also some hope that the rise of new pedagogical methods at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as the educational reforms that Dutch schoolteacher Jan Ligthart (1859-1916), German esotericist Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), Italian educationalist Maria Montessori (1870-1952) and Dutch educationalist Rommert Casimir (1877-1957) proposed, would benefit the advancement of a free development of religious life. These methods were based on the idea that education should not only contribute to children's cognitive development,

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<sup>138</sup> "...een Christelijk predikant..." ; "...leden van alle Christelijke kerkgenootschappen..." Quoted from: 'Het hellend vlak', *Ibid.* LIV.43 (21 March 1919), 1-2. The article in question is: J.D.R. and W.A.L. Ros-Vrijman, 'Van verre en van nabij', *Theosophia* XXVI.12 (March 1919), 382.

<sup>139</sup> G.A. de Ridder reversed the matter: he felt that liberal Protestants had much more in common with liberal Jews than with the adherents of little religions, but he doubted whether the growing group of liberal Protestants who stressed attachment to the Christian tradition could feel at ease in a federation in which Jews participated as well. [G.A. de Ridder in:] 'Kerknieuws – De vrijzinnige federatie', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCII.29486 (19 April 1919), morning paper, 2.

<sup>140</sup> 'Kerknieuws – Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVI.318 (15 November 1919), evening paper B, 1-2.

<sup>141</sup> 'De vrijzinnige Joden', *Nieuw Israëlietisch Weekblad* LV.26 (21 November 1919), 9.

<sup>142</sup> 'Kerknieuws – Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCIV.30117 (17 January 1921), 1; [J. Vigeveno], 'Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *De Hervorming* 1921-03 (22 January 1921), 23. At least one Jew continued to be involved with the federation afterwards: José Vigeveno (1891-1943), who was elected as the secretary to the federation in January 1921. See: 'Kerknieuws – Vrij-religieuzen', *Het Vaderland* (18 January 1921), morning paper, 4; J. Vigeveno, 'Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties', *De Hervorming* 1921-04 (29 January 1921), 31; H.G. van Wijngaarden and J. Vigeveno, 'Mededeelingen', *Ibid.* 1921-09 (5 March 1921), 71.

<sup>143</sup> L. Schimmel, *Towards a Future of Sincerity and Harmony. Dutch Jews and the Appeal of Reform Judaism* [unpublished thesis, Utrecht University, 2007], 85.

<sup>144</sup> Michman, *Het liberale Jodendom in Nederland*, 42-48.



but also to the development of their inner lives. Just as life reform ideologies as vegetarianism and teetotalism, these educational reform methods were, though not religious in themselves, often religiously motivated and intended to ‘spiritualise’ people’s lives. As such, they were part of a larger ‘humanitarian-idealistic movement’, mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, that also included the little religions.

Montessori education provides an interesting case. Its champions, particularly R. Joosten-Chotzen (1899-1983) and A.H.G. Voerman-Verkade (1866-1939), tried to win (other) modernists over to their cause by emphasising that Montessori education did indeed further the free development of religious life. Reform pedagogics in general, they highlighted, were founded on the conviction that absolute freedom with regard to individual self-development is a prerequisite for individuals to live in social harmony, and that children are capable of cultivating ethical virtues on their own. They depicted Montessori as a deeply religious woman, whose methods were intended to harmonise the outcomes of the natural sciences with human beings’ innate religious ‘instinct’.<sup>145</sup> Although there was a strong sentiment in the modernist movement, dealt with in more detail in chapter 9, that schools one-sidedly focused on children’s cognitive development, reform pedagogics had only limited appeal. The interest that their rise had awakened in modernist circles faded upon closer examination.<sup>146</sup> H.T. de Graaf, one of the leading experts in the field of psychology of religion, specifically questioned the Roman Catholic frame of reference that Montessori used to describe what education in a religious sense should be. In his eyes, that frame of reference conflicted with the ideal of a truly *free* development of children’s inner lives.<sup>147</sup>

## 5. Atheism and Nondenominationalism

The *fin de siècle* era not only witnessed the rise of ‘a hundred and one prophets’; it was also the epoch in which atheism, being the total absence of belief in a personal God, spread in intellectual circles more than ever before and gradually penetrated even into lower social strata. Slowly, atheism became socially more acceptable as a philosophy of life.<sup>148</sup> In the Netherlands, a freethinkers’ magazine called ‘*De Dageraad*’ (*The Dawn*), founded in 1855, and a freethinkers’ association of the same name, established a year later, developed into the main platform of militant atheism – that is to say, a platform for those who not only denied the

<sup>145</sup> R. Joosten-Chotzen, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Over Montessori-opvoeding’, *De Hervorming* 1920-34 (28 August 1920), 134-135; 1920-35 (4 September 1920), 139; 1920-36 (11 September 1920), 142-143. A.H.G. Voerman-Verkade, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Montessori’, *Ibid.* 1923-09 (3 March 1923), 66-67. Joosten-Chotzen and Voerman-Verkade were two of the first Montessori teachers in the Netherlands. See: M.J. Schwegman, *Maria Montessori, 1870-1952. Kind van haar tijd, vrouw van de wereld* (Amsterdam 1999), 216; E.F. Verkade-Cartier van Dissel, *Eduard Verkade en zijn strijd voor een nieuw toneel* (Zutphen 1978), 30.

<sup>146</sup> On liberal Protestantism and reform pedagogics, see also: Schuurisma, *Jaren van opgang*, 298-299.

<sup>147</sup> H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Montessori over godsdienstige opvoeding’, *De Hervorming* 1924-15 (12 April 1924), 114; H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Montessori’s godsdienstige opvoeding’, *Ibid.* 1924-19 (10 May 1924), 146-147. Liberal Reformed minister N. Westendorp Boerma (1872-1951) was sympathetic towards the basis idea of Montessori education to stimulate children’s self-motivation, but felt that Montessori’s teaching methods carried this to an extreme. Sunday school teacher G.A. Hoevers feared that Montessori education would only find acceptance among the well-to-do. See: N. Westendorp Boerma, ‘Leestafel – “Een Montessori-moeder” en “Dr. Maria Montessori”’, *Ibid.* 1915-49 (4 December 1915), 446-447; G.A. Hoevers, ‘Leestafel – “Opvoeder en kind”’, *Ibid.* 1916-30 (22 July 1916), 255-256.

<sup>148</sup> V.P. Pecora, ‘Secularism / Atheism / Agnosticism’, in: M. Saler (ed.), *The Fin-de-Siècle World* (London and New York 2015), 537-553, there 537; Van Eijnatten en Van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis*, 276.

existence of God, but also made propaganda for an atheist, materialist outlook on life and vehemently opposed all manifestations of religious life. In their combat against religion, *Dageraad* atheists took a firmer line with modernists than with orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics. They regarded the supernaturalist world view of the latter two groups as intellectually so inferior that it would be futile to defend their cause among those groups. With modernists, on the other hand, they had a line of reasoning based on contemporary scientific and scholarly methods and results in common. Yet, while *Dageraad* atheists believed to accept the consequence to which this line of reasoning inevitably led, namely the acknowledgement that there is no God, they blamed modernists for being half-hearted, for shrinking from accepting that consequence.<sup>149</sup> Modernists, *Dageraad* atheists argued, were accordingly only able to justify their theism by falling back on the subjective category of ‘feelings’, by making illogical and unsubstantiated mental leaps. Modernist ministers who left the church due to religious doubt, among them Pierson and Busken Huet, confirmed atheists in being right about modernists fooling themselves. Contrary to colleagues who continued to preach a ‘false’ compatibility of religion and reason, these ministers were applauded in *Dageraad* circles for being honest enough to admit that God did not belong in a modern world view.<sup>150</sup>

As orthodox Protestants similarly accused modernists of being dishonest by staying in the churches, the latter felt that they were fighting a two-front battle: they were wedged between confessionalism to their right and materialist, atheist freethinking to their left.<sup>151</sup> Although the threat of confessionalism was what caused the NPB to come into being, the atheism of which *De Dageraad* was the incarnation was perceived as just as big a threat to a free development of religious life and was therefore counterattacked with just as much zeal in modernist circles.

By claiming that modernists were actually freethinkers if they reasoned logically, *Dageraad* atheists looked at modernists in a similar way to how the latter looked at *evangelischen* and moderate orthodoxy. This claim provoked modernists to engage in controversies with *De Dageraad*, all the more, as it was grist to the mill of orthodoxy.<sup>152</sup> As early as 1858, C.P. Tiele, for example, responded to freethinkers’ conviction that modernists were halfway along the path to atheism, by claiming to see a deep rift between modernists and freethinkers.<sup>153</sup> Referring to himself in the third person, Tiele wrote

to regard no other journal as unscientific as *De Dageraad*, though the word ‘science’ is always on its lips. [...] He thinks that *De Dageraad* lacks sincerity and love of truth, as well as fervour stemming from a sincere conviction, which enables us to be invigorated by those with whom we disagree. He is deeply hurt when he reads this magazine, as it insults and scoffs at priests and ministers of all denominations [...], at the Gospel he loves and the Lord he follows. Although he acknowledges that, on rare occasions, a well-written article can be found among the overwhelming amount of drivel and

<sup>149</sup> O. Noordenbos, *Het atheïsme in Nederland in de negentiende eeuw. Een kritisch overzicht* (Rotterdam 1931), 31-34, 88.

<sup>150</sup> H.U. Meyboom, ‘Het doel van het godsdienstonderwijs’, *De Hervorming* 1878-22 (1 June 1878), 1-2, there 1; Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 235-239; Noordenbos, *Het atheïsme in Nederland*, 43, 77-100; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 82-83.

<sup>151</sup> Exemplary in this respect is: A.D. Loman, *De modernen als middenpartij* (Amsterdam 1873).

<sup>152</sup> Both in confessionalist and *evangelische* circles, it was common to equate modernism with unbelief. See: Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 203-235.

<sup>153</sup> Noordenbos, *Het atheïsme in Nederland*, 43.

nonsense and mockery of which *De Dageraad* is full, he can [therefore] not make his peace with this magazine.<sup>154</sup>

In *De Hervorming*, freethinkers' argument that modernism lacked a solid basis was repeatedly reversed: reason and science might not in themselves sufficiently verify the existence of God, but they could not decisively *falsify* it either.<sup>155</sup> In fact, modernists believed that freethinkers were not thinking 'free' at all, as they presumed a priori that God was just a figment of human imagination. Reducing spirit to matter was a dogma to them. Materialism, atheism and freethinking – in modernist circles, usually no distinction was made between the three –, did not provide principles of life, principles on the basis of which individuals could organise their lives.<sup>156</sup> This last argument modernists used was, as briefly mentioned in the introductory chapter and dealt with extensively in chapter 6, rooted in the idea that piety and ethics were closely if not inextricably connected and that moral life could only genuinely flourish in combination with religious life.<sup>157</sup> Without religion, man was said to be 'incomplete', and society was said to lack the incentive necessary for progress.<sup>158</sup> In an 1891 lecture, A. Réville (1826-1906), a French liberal Protestant minister who had served the Walloon Reformed congregation in Rotterdam from 1851 to 1872, exemplarily stated that

all life perishes where religion disappears. [...] In due course, no society, no city, no family can do without religion. Moral life languishes without it. To a certain extent, morality and religion are independent of each other. But both relate to each other as a tree to its leaves, flowers and fruits. Religion is like the juice that enables the tree to develop and to grow. That is why Christianity is the highest manifestation of religious life, as religion and morality are grown together within it.<sup>159</sup>

Accordingly, warning against atheism was generally seen as a task that the NPB had to fulfil.

Nonetheless, in the 1870s there had seemed to be some ambivalence towards atheism in the circles of the so-called '*ethisch-modernen*', who have been characterised in chapter 2.<sup>160</sup>

<sup>154</sup> "...acht geen Tijdschrift minder wetenschappelijk dan de *Dageraad*, die altoos de wetenschap in den mond heeft [...]. Hij vindt in de *Dageraad* noch waarheidszin noch waarheidsliefde, noch dien warmen adem eener vaste overtuiging, die ons zelfs bij tegenstanders verkwikt. Hij wordt diep gegriefd, als hij dat Tijdschrift inziet, en daar over de priesters en leeraars van alle gezindheden, [...], ja, over het evangelie dat hij liefheeft en den Heer die hij aanhangt, de vuilste spot- en smaadredenen vindt uitgestort. En, hoewel hij erkent, dat soms, zeer zelden, een goedgeschreven stuk tusschen den ontzaglijken hoeveelheid galimathias simple, double en triple, waaraan de *Dageraad* overrijk is, verdwaald is geraakt, hij zou [...] geen vrede kunnen hebben met [dit] Tijdschrift." Quoted from: C.P. Tiele, 'Een open brief ter beantwoording van een bijzonderen brief', *De Teekenen des Tijds* I.7 (21 November 1858), 1.

<sup>155</sup> E.g.: 'Een geloofsgetuigenis van een dienaar der wetenschap', *De Hervorming* 1874-39 (24 September 1874), 2; 'Godsbegrip en geloof in God', *Ibid.* 1881-51 (24 December 1881), 206; 1881-52 (31 December 1881), 210; G.J.D. Mounier, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het atheïsme en de wiskunde', *Ibid.* 1881-51 (24 December 1881), 207.

<sup>156</sup> E.g.: [P. Feenstra, Jr. in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Oudebildtzijsl', *Ibid.* 1881-08 (26 February 1881), 30; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Salter over Kuenen', *Ibid.* 1888-50 (15 December 1888), 198.

<sup>157</sup> E.g.: [A. Kuenen in:] 'Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsch Protestantenvbond', *Ibid.* 1877-02 (13 January 1877), 2; [A. Kuenen in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Oud-Beijerland', *Ibid.* 1879-30 (26 July 1879), 117-118; 'Zedelijkheid en godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1888-48 (1 December 1888), 189-191; 1888-49 (8 December 1888), 193-194; 1888-50 (15 December 1888), 197-198.

<sup>158</sup> Exemplary in this respect is: H.G. Hagen, 'Toespraak', *Ibid.* 1892-44 (29 October 1892), 173-174, there 174.

<sup>159</sup> "Waar de godsdienst verdwijnt, gaat het leven verloren. [...] Geen maatschappij, geen stad, geen huisgezin kan op den duur den godsdienst missen. Het zedelijk leven kwijnt er door. Men spreekt wel van een onafhankelijke zedelijkheid; en tot op zekere hoogte met recht [...]. Maar beiden staan tot elkaar als de boom tot zijne bladeren en bloemen en vruchten. De godsdienst is als het sap, dat den boom doet leven en groeien. Daarom is het Christendom de hoogste openbaring van het godsdienstig leven, omdat daarin godsdienst en zedelijkheid zijn saamgegroeid." Quoted in: [J. Réville in:] J.H. Maronier, 'Een getuigenis', *Ibid.* 1891-36 (5 September 1891), 143.

<sup>160</sup> For the relationship between ethical modernists and atheists, see: Noordenbos, *Het atheïsme in Nederland*, 91-99.

One of them, A.G. van Hamel, had coined the term “‘atheistic’ nuance of religion” during the 1874 meeting of modern theologians in Amsterdam, describing his philosophy of life as “religion without metaphysics.”<sup>161</sup> Just as *Dageraad* atheists had done, Van Hamel not only argued that images of God were figments of human imagination, but also that God did not exist as a real power at all – ‘God’ was nothing more than the objectified projection of man’s moral faculty upon reality. What distinguished Van Hamel from *Dageraad* atheists was, by his own account, the intensity with which he experienced his ethical idealism; he did not see his ethical ideals as relative, but as the highest good in life. As he attached absolute value to the principles of life imbued with the spirit of Jesus, he felt that he still was a Christian and still belonged in the church. Yet in 1879, Van Hamel came to the conclusion that religion could not do without metaphysics after all and that those who could no longer accept a metaphysical world view should be straightforward enough to hand in their church membership – which he did himself, permanently stepping down from the pulpit.<sup>162</sup> Another ‘ethical modernist’, A. Bruining, came to a similar conclusion around the same time, but did not follow him: Bruining came to acknowledge that God is not merely a projection of humanity’s need for ethical perfection, but a metaphysical reality.<sup>163</sup> With Van Hamel leaving the church altogether and Bruining reconsidering his point of view, the ‘atheistic nuance’ within ethical modernism perished. After a couple of years, ethical modernism as a whole faded into the background.

As said in chapter 3, orthodox Protestants regarded modernists as baptised heathens, equating modernism with unbelief. In 1889, neo-Calvinist minister W.F.A. Winckel (1852-1945) added a little extra to that thought by accusing the NPB of “eagerly accepting atheists as members.”<sup>164</sup> Although modernists vehemently objected to being depicted as unbelievers, it was not denied in *De Hervorming* that individuals whom others might see as atheists could indeed obtain NPB membership. No one had the right to pass judgement on someone else’s conscience: if an individual who professed not to believe in God could reconcile the aim of the association to advance a free development of religious life with his conscience, he was welcome in the NPB.<sup>165</sup> Even if that would substantiate negative orthodox stereotyping, being firm in principle in the purely hypothetical case of atheists knocking on the doors of the NPB was unrelinquishable.

Regarding the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, no exact figures are available of the number of atheists in the Netherlands. Yet, such figures do exist of the number of Dutch citizens without church membership.<sup>166</sup> Since 1830, a

<sup>161</sup> “... ‘atheïstische’ nuance van godsdienst...”; “...godsdienst zonder metafysica...” Quoted from: A.G. van Hamel, ‘Godsdienst zonder metafysica’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* VIII (1874), 477-509, there 507.

<sup>162</sup> A.G. van Hamel, ‘Toelichting en antikritiek’, *Ibid.* IX (1875), 238-260; Wils, *De omweg van de wetenschap*, 217-218; Trapman, ‘Anton Gerard van Hamel’, 258-261; J. Trapman, ‘Atheistic Christianity. The Case of Anton Gerard van Hamel (1842-1907)’, in: Kenis and Van der Wall, *Religious Modernism in the Low Countries*, 131-145, there 144; J. Trapman, ‘Twijfel aan het ambt en pijnlijke liefdeservaringen. Anton Gerard van Hamel als Waals predikant in Leeuwarden (1868-1872)’, in: A.J.C.M. Gabriëls et al. (eds.), *In vriendschap en vertrouwen. Cultuurhistorische essays over confidentialiteit* (Hilversum 2014), 97-107, there 98, 102.

<sup>163</sup> Van Diggelen, ‘Albertus Bruining’, 35-46.

<sup>164</sup> “Hier worden atheïsten gaarne als leden van den Bond aangemerkt.” Quoted from: W.F.A. Winckel, ‘Buitenland – Duitschland’, *De Heraut* 579 (27 January 1889), 6. Winckel indicated that the word ‘atheists’ included the ‘ethical modernists’.

<sup>165</sup> ‘Van onze geestverwanten in Noord-Duitschland’, *De Hervorming* 1889-08 (23 February 1889), 29-30, there 30; M.A.N. Rovers, ‘Nog iets over dr. Moritz Schwalb’, *Ibid.* 1889-10 (9 March 1889), 38.

<sup>166</sup> Here, the terms ‘nondenominational’, ‘churchless’ and ‘unchurched’ are used to refer to the state of being without church membership. The term ‘secularisation’ is avoided, because it has several meanings and could therefore cause

census was taken more or less every ten years. One of the variables recorded in the census was the denominational affiliation of Dutch citizens. These figures also show how many citizens stated that they did not belong to any church denomination at all. The group of atheists was included in the category of the ‘unchurched’, but did not coincide with it – not every churchless citizen lacked a religious persuasion altogether.<sup>167</sup> Among the unchurched, there were, for example, Spiritists and Theosophists.<sup>168</sup> Those members of the NPB who were not members of a church denomination at the same time – arguably a minority of the NPB membership – were technically ‘churchless’ as well, but were not included among the unchurched in the ten-year censuses: in spite of it being an association, the NPB was treated as a separate denomination in the censuses.<sup>169</sup> The number of churchless citizens was as low as 295 in 1809, out of a population of 2.2 million. It was still only 12,000 in 1879, on a population of 4 million. Afterwards, it rapidly increased. In 1889, 66,000 out of 4.5 million citizens stated to be churchless. In 1909, 291,000 out of 5.6 million citizens did not belong to a church denomination. In 1930, the number of churchless citizens was already as high as 1.1 million, out of a population of 7.9 million. Expressed in percentages, it increased from less than one ten-thousandth in 1809 to 0.3 in 1879 and ultimately to 14.3 in 1930.<sup>170</sup> In his 1933 dissertation on nondenominationalism, referred to in the introductory chapter, J.P. Kruijt lists several factors that contributed to this increase, such as changes in economic production, the spread of natural scientific knowledge, urbanisation, a growing role of the state in social life at the expense of the churches, and psychological differences between inhabitants of various geographical areas.<sup>171</sup>

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confusion. ‘Secularisation’ can refer to the confiscation of ecclesial property by worldly authorities or to the permission granted by the Vatican to Roman Catholic conventuals who want to live outside a convent, but it is usually defined as the structural decline of the social influence of religion in the broadest sense. When this last definition is used, ‘secularisation’ thus includes the growth of the number of nondenominational people, but encompasses other phenomena as well, such as the loss of functions churches previously had and decreasing tolerance towards the use of religious arguments in public discussions. See: K.M.T.C. Dobbelaere, ‘Secularization’, in: W.H. Swatos, Jr. et al. (eds.), *Encyclopedia of Religion and Society* (Walnut Creek etc. 1998), 452-456. For a general discussion of the most influential secularisation theorists, see: K.M.T.C. Dobbelaere, ‘Trend Report: Secularization. A Multi-Dimensional Concept’, *Current Sociology* XXIX.2 (March 1981), 3-153.

In Dutch, ‘nondenominationalism’ can be translated either as ‘onkerkelijkheid’ or ‘buitenkerkelijkheid’. In *De Hervorming*, both terms are used interchangeably. Yet, in recent Dutch sociology of religion, a more refined typology is used. B. Pijnenburg, for example, distinguishes between four categories: *ontkerkelijkt*, referring to individuals who have been raised in a particular faith, yet who no longer identify with a particular church denomination (those individuals are called ‘kerkverlaters’ or ‘lapsed churchgoers’); *randkerkelijk*, referring to individuals who have been raised in a particular faith and are still members of a particular church denomination, yet who do not attend church regularly; *kerks*, referring to individuals who have been raised in a particular faith, still are church members and attend church regularly; and *buitenkerkelijk*, referring to individuals who have not been raised in a particular faith and continue to lack church membership. In this typology, *onkerkelijk* includes both *ontkerkelijkt* and *buitenkerkelijk*. See: B. Pijnenburg, ‘Katholieken en protestanten in hedendaags Nederland. Een herwaardering van de deconfessionalisering’, *Sociologische Gids* XXXI.6 (1984), 487-506, there 439.

<sup>167</sup> Referred to as ‘believing without belonging’ in recent English-language studies. McLeod states that “the phenomenon of ‘believing without belonging’ [...] was already widespread in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.” Quoted from: H. McLeod, ‘Introduction’, in: H. McLeod and W. Ustorf (eds.), *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe, 1750-2000* (Cambridge 2003), 1-26, there 13.

<sup>168</sup> Yet, it should be kept in mind that, as shown above, an interest in one of the little religions could be combined with church membership.

<sup>169</sup> No distinction was made between NPB members with and without membership of a church denomination.

<sup>170</sup> Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart van Nederland*, 276.

<sup>171</sup> All of these causes are extensively dealt with in: Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*; H. Faber et al., *Ontkerkelijking en buitenkerkelijkheid in Nederland* (Assen 1970); Knippenberg, *De religieuze kaart van Nederland*, 227-229; M. te Grotenhuis, *Ontkerkelijking. Oorzaken en gevolgen* (Nijmegen 1999).

One of the most important factors that Kruijt holds responsible for the growth of the unchurched is social dissatisfaction and the rise of socialism stemming from that. As chapter 7 shows, the early socialist labour movement, taking shape in the Netherlands around 1880, was imbued with an atheist or at least strong anti-religious spirit.<sup>172</sup> Its first real leader was a former modernist minister: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis. His resignation as a minister, in 1879, was a decisive exit from church life and, although he continued to appreciate the person of Jesus of Nazareth, in whom he recognised a radical social critic and social reformer, even a break with Christianity altogether. From then on, instead of preaching the Gospel, he preached a socialist society in which no man would possess more than another. Being active in *Dageraad* circles in the 1880s, Domela Nieuwenhuis interspersed his socialist discourse with anti-religious rhetoric. By so doing, Kruijt argues, he stimulated his working-class audience to walk out of the churches as well.<sup>173</sup> This is not to say that every socialist was a lapsed churchgoer. Moreover, as analysed in chapter 7, anti-religious sentiments became weaker within the socialist labour movement after 1900. Nonetheless, a strong correlation between socialism and nondenominationalism cannot be denied. In politically socialist bulwarks, such as the Frisian countryside and the urban and industrialised areas in the Western Netherlands, the number of unchurched citizens was relatively higher than in other parts of the country.<sup>174</sup>

In modernist circles, the interpretations given to the growth of nondenominationalism varied. One interpretation was that it was a direct consequence of the ongoing factional quarrels in church life: a growing amount of individuals became tired of those quarrels and disappointedly left the churches.<sup>175</sup> Some highlighted that orthodoxy was solely responsible for the growing number of lapsed churchgoers. They reversed the orthodox argument that the modernist message of a Christianity without Christ as a mediator, and modernists' view on the Bible as an ahistorical book, fostered apostasy – instead, individuals with an orthodox background had never learned to differentiate between the form and content of faith, and consequently lost their faith altogether when they could no longer accept the form.<sup>176</sup> Others, however, felt that modernists contributed most to abandonment of the church and were even pleased with this. In their eyes, it was a sign that the modernist movement was successful. The modernist movement wanted individuals to acquire truly *personal* convictions about life. Confessions of faith prescribing specific conceptions of God therefore had to be rid of, as well as 'perverse' incentives to be a church member, such as social pressure or financial benefit.<sup>177</sup> Apparently, a small number of modernists felt, the 'purification process' after which the modernist movement aspired was beginning to pay off:

<sup>172</sup> J.P. Kruijt, 'De bevolking der Zaanstreek', *Mensch en Maatschappij* IV (1928), 306-322, there 314-315; Staverman, *Volk in Friesland buiten de kerk*, 185-199; H. de Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme in Nederland in het kader van zijn tijd* I (Baarn 1976), 17.

<sup>173</sup> Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*, 178-179.

<sup>174</sup> H. Knippenberg and B.C. de Pater, *De eenwording van Nederland. Schaalvergroting en integratie sinds 1800* (Nijmegen 1988), 194-198; H. Knippenberg and B.C. de Pater, 'Brandpunt van macht en modernisering? De positie van Holland binnen Nederland na 1800', in: De Nijs and Beukers (eds.), *Geschiedenis van Holland* IIIb, 547-619, there 609.

<sup>175</sup> E.g.: F. Dijkema, 'De volkstelling', *De Hervorming* 1911-48 (2 December 1911), 381-382, there 382; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Hoofdartikel – De uitslag der volkstelling', *Ibid.* 1922-38 (23 September 1922), 297-298, there 298; A.E.F. Junod, 'Kerkelijk leven – Kerkelijke en onkerkelijke cijfers', *Ibid.* 1923-14 (7 April 1923), 107-108, there 108.

<sup>176</sup> E.g.: G. Horretius de Haas, *Geloof en leven* (Amsterdam 1925), 41-44.

<sup>177</sup> In other words, individuals should not become church members to be able to profit from diaconal charity and neither because they felt socially obliged to do so. E.g.: [J.L. van Tricht], 'Berichten en mededeelingen – De openstelling der Christelijke gemeente voor nieuwe leden', *De Hervorming* 1916-18 (29 April 1916), 147.

those who had so far stayed in church for reasons other than purely religious ones were giving up their church membership in larger numbers.<sup>178</sup> Sociologists would later describe the growth of nondenominationalism as such a 'purification process' as well.<sup>179</sup> Yet, they emphasised that modernism accelerated and intensified this growth at most; it only contributed to nondenominationalism in combination with other factors. For example, individuals who only stayed in church to profit from diaconal aid would have not been stimulated to give up their church membership by a modernist preaching had the government not have effectively taken over social welfare activities from the churches.<sup>180</sup>

A more common reaction in modernist circles to the growth of people leaving the church was not to explain it, but to downplay it.<sup>181</sup> One way to do this was by accentuating that it was not confined to the modernist movement. Some modernists contended that orthodoxy was also affected by the increase of people abandoning the church, and perhaps even harder, as it was less receptive to modern culture and consequently stood much further away from churchless people.<sup>182</sup> Another way to downplay the growth of nondenominationalism was by contrasting it with modernist congregations and NPB branches that flourished,<sup>183</sup> or by clinging to signs, small as they might be, that seemed to indicate a religious 'revival'.<sup>184</sup> The growing interest in little religions in the early twentieth century, for example, could be interpreted as a sign that more and more people came to seek God.<sup>185</sup> Others maintained that many who left the churches did so due to religious

<sup>178</sup> As H. Oort argued, sanctimoniousness had reduced due to the modernist movement: since the rise of the latter, individuals had become more inclined to admit their religious indifference. See: H. Oort, 'Hoofdartikelen – De waarde van het geloof in God', *Ibid.* 1917-11 (17 March 1917), 86-87; H. Oort, *Het Christendom dat komt* (Maassluis 1918), 23.

<sup>179</sup> Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*, 325-327; Verberne, *Geschiedenis van Nederland* VIII, 91; Smits, *Kerk en stad*, 101; L.J. van der Kam, *Hoe is de stand bij de vrijzinnigen?* (Utrecht s.a.), 6.

<sup>180</sup> Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*, 247-249, 310; H. Noordegraaf, 'Did Modernism Promote Unbelief?', in: Kenis and Van der Wall (eds.), *Religious Modernism in the Low Countries*, 147-158, there 154.

<sup>181</sup> J.M. van Veen (1905-2000), at the time a theological candidate, regretfully noticed that the issue of nondenominationalism was either not reflected upon fundamentally enough, or reflected upon from a perspective borrowed from orthodoxy in modernist circles as early as 1933. See: J.M. van Veen, *Kerk en oecumenische beweging* (Utrecht 1933), 5. The tendency to downplay the issue of nondenominationalism was strong among modernists. Still in 1947, E.D. Spelberg stated that there were at least a million religious liberal in the Netherlands, most of whom did not belong to a church. L.J. van der Kam argued that Spelberg was far too optimistic: most of the churchless were not religiously liberal, but religiously indifferent. See: Van der Kam, *Hoe is de stand bij de vrijzinnigen?*, 8.

<sup>182</sup> E.g.: A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Hoofdartikel – De uitslag der volkstelling', *De Hervorming* 1922-38 (23 September 1922), 297-298, there 298; W.R.M. Noordhoff, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme en onkerkelijkheid. Een samenvatting van de beschouwingen en besprekingen van het Congres ter bestudeering van het vraagstuk der onkerkelijkheid in November 1936 door de Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme gehouden* (Utrecht 1937), 13-17.

<sup>183</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – Het staat er nog zoo slecht niet voor...', *De Hervorming* 1919-37 (13 September 1919), 163; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Hoofdartikel – Het een en ander uit het jongste verleden van den bond', *Ibid.* 1921-37 (17 September 1921), 290; H.T. de Graaf, 'Hoofdartikel – De algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1921-43 (29 October 1921), 337-338, there 337.

<sup>184</sup> E.g.: [P. van der Meulen in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1909-47 (20 November 1909), 371-373, there 372; F. Dijkema, 'De volkstelling', *Ibid.* 1911-48 (2 December 1911), 381-382, there 382; 'Redactioneel – Het kerkbezoek', *Ibid.* 1914-22 (30 May 1914), 189-190, there 190; [N.A. Bruining], 'Hoofdartikel – Uit de openingsrede van mej.dr. N.A. Bruining, van de moderne theologenvergadering', *Ibid.* 1923-16 (21 April 1923), 121-123, there 122; N. van der Kolff, 'Kerkelijk leven – De jongere intellectueelen en de bestaande godsdienstige organisaties', *Ibid.* 1923-40 (6 October 1923), 314-316, there 315. Others, such as F.E. van Santen, disagreed. E.g.: F.E. van Santen, 'Redactioneel – Studie in plaats van godsdienst?', *Ibid.* 1916-43 (21 October 1916), 372; F.E. van Santen, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De kwijnende godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1918-22 (1 June 1918), 85-86.

<sup>185</sup> Heering, however, argued that if such a revival was indeed taking place, it would not benefit the modernist movement: he believed that the amount of individuals with an interest in liberal Christianity among the religious unchurched was negligible. See: G.J. Heering, 'Ingezonden stukken – Is het waar?', *Ibid.* 1907-45 (9 November 1907), 358-359, there 359.

indifference rather than conscious anti-religious motivations. In any case, it was acknowledged in modernist circles that lapsed churchgoers were not necessarily irreligious. What is more, as some modernists stressed, claiming to be irreligious and actually being irreligious were not two sides of the same coin. P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., H.U. Meyboom and Lutheran minister J.A. Helper Sesbrugger (1851-1906) argued that those who claimed to have no religious faith yet were shown to be highly conscientious and to help others in becoming high-principled *personalities* were no unbelievers at all.<sup>186</sup> Such people were one with modernists in spirit, even though they did not count themselves among modernists. Without recognising it themselves, they thus belonged to the modernist movement.<sup>187</sup>

Yet, although it was denied that the growth of nondenominationalism coincided with the increase of irreligion in Dutch society, the circumstance that people left the churches while remaining religious came more and more to be seen as problematic in modernist circles after 1900. As a result of the ‘ecclesial turn’, the aim of the modernist movement to advance a free development of religious life both within and outside of the churches narrowed down to the intention to lead religious citizens without church membership (back) into church life.<sup>188</sup> In contrast to the earliest decades of the modernist movement, when voices disparaging the institution of the church had predominated, voices stressing the importance and even the indispensability of churchgoing now gained prevalence. As said in chapter 4, there continued to be modernists who attached little value to the institution of the church,<sup>189</sup> but in general, the opinion that religious life could only thrive to the full in an ecclesial shape came to prevail.<sup>190</sup>

Some got the impression that churchgoing modernists more and more looked down upon religious people who lacked church membership. Not questioning church life as such, they felt that modernists should try to make church life more attractive to the unchurched.<sup>191</sup> Others vehemently opposed that. In 1914, for example, Mennonite minister F. Dijkema (1877-1944) urged modernist ministers to never adjust their preaching to the wishes of those who did not

<sup>186</sup> [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] ‘Elfde algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* 1881-45 (12 November 1881), 181-183, there 182; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] ‘Ingezonden stukken – Natuurlijke godsdienst’, *Ibid.* 1883-18 (5 May 1883), 72; J.A. Helper Sesbrugger, ‘Godsdienstloos en toch...?’, *Ibid.* 1889-50 (14 December 1889), 200; H.U. Meyboom, “‘Godsdienstloos als wij zijn’”, *Ibid.* 1889-51 (21 December 1889), 204; J.A. Helper Sesbrugger, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De Protestantenbond en godsdienstloze godsdienst’, *Ibid.* 1890-02 (11 January 1890), 8; ‘Buitenland – Onder helder licht gezien’, *Ibid.* 1895-18 (4 May 1895), 71-72, there 72.

<sup>187</sup> This claim was still made in the twentieth century. See, e.g.: J.W. van der Linden, ‘Geloof en ongeloof’, *Ibid.* 1912-16 (20 April 1912), 121-122, there 121; V.H., ‘Hoofdartikelen – In de verte’, *Ibid.* 1916-25 (17 June 1916), 209.

<sup>188</sup> F.E. van Santen, for example, argued that if the religious ‘revival’ referred to above would not be channelled to the churches, it would soon disappear. See: F.E. van Santen, ‘Kerkelijk leven’, *Ibid.* 1919-37 (13 September 1919), 164.

<sup>189</sup> Meyboom, Van Loenen Martinet and De Lang were prominent examples.

<sup>190</sup> E.g.: Noordhoff, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme en onkerkelijkheid*, 6-7, 13. Exemplary in this respect is what layman J. Ellerbroek (1894-1964) wrote in 1930: “We can easily fool ourselves into thinking that we can cultivate our religious life just as well outside as inside the church. [...] Let us thoroughly consider whether this line of reasoning does not stem from a certain laziness.” (“*Wij kunnen ons gemakkelijk wijs maken, dat wij ons godsdienstig leven even goed kunnen cultiveeren buiten de Kerk om, als er in. [...] Laten wij dan terdege controleeren of die redeneering niet voortspruit uit een zekere gemakzucht.*”) Ellerbroek argued that the church is one of the defining elements of Christianity. See: Ellerbroek, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XVIII, 9-10. That same year, H.T. de Graaf even stated that, next to the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, church attendance was more and more felt as a sacrament in liberal Protestant circles. See: H.T. de Graaf, *Kerk en kerkgaan* XIX. *Theologie en kerk* (Huis ter Heide 1930), 5.

<sup>191</sup> E.g.: A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De vraag van den heer Taal’, *De Hervorming* 1918-12 (23 March 1918), 47; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Het federatieplan’, *Ibid.* 1919-20 (17 May 1919), 83.



belong to their congregation.<sup>192</sup> Five years later, J.J. Bleeker vented his gall on what he saw as a ‘genuflection’ towards the unchurched: “for decades, it was generally thought that no sincere religious life could exist outside the churches. [...] Recently, however, the previously disqualified religiously-minded unchurched are enthroned.” In Bleeker’s opinion, the religiosity of these people should not be valued too highly. He therefore advised the modernist movement not to incline its ears too close to them.<sup>193</sup> G. Horreüs de Haas fully agreed: “in my eyes,” he stated, “all attempts to create and organise a religious gathering with new rituals and forms are vain. We should rather try to be uplifted by the existing forms.”<sup>194</sup> These modernists did not think that church life should be reformed to interest the unchurched in joining it, but, on the contrary, that the unchurched should be persuaded of the high religious value of existing church practices. Accordingly, those practices were not held responsible for the growing number of lapsed churchgoers, but lapsed churchgoers themselves: they did not recognise the high value of those practices, for which they were themselves to blame. The most important question was not *why* people left the churches, but rather *how* they could be convinced to retrace their steps.

In the NPB, the intensified denominational awareness that was part of the ‘ecclesial turn’ caused tensions between the majority that combined NPB membership with church membership, and the minority that did not.<sup>195</sup> Yet, notwithstanding these tensions, the difference between NPB members with and without church membership was rather artificial. True, both groups had different interests: church-minded NPB members did not want the NPB to weaken denominational church life, while unchurched NPB members did not want the NPB to efface itself in order not to hinder liberal Reformed, liberal Lutheran, Mennonite and Remonstrant congregations from developing. But the latter had no different devotional preferences than the former: particularly when the ‘ecclesial turn’ set in, there was basically no difference between attending a religious service in an NPB branch or in a modernist church congregation. The unchurched in the NPB might have objections against the *institution* of the church, but they were obviously not against church *practices* – otherwise, they would have left the NPB when branches became more church-like. For churchless yet religious individuals who did not appreciate church practices, however, it now became less attractive to join the NPB. In the early twentieth century, the association therefore found itself in a difficult predicament. The ‘ecclesial turn’ caused the NPB to be seen as a competitor among church-minded liberal Reformed, liberal Lutheran, Mennonite and Remonstrant modernists, due to which the NPB lost its central position in the modernist movement. The ‘ecclesial turn’ also caused the NPB to become more church-like itself. This limited

<sup>192</sup> F. Dijkema, ‘Verandering in onze godsdienstprediking?’, *Ibid.* 1914-09 (28 February 1914), 71. In 1919, A.C. Schade van Westrum felt that giving in to objections among the churchless against the sermon-centredness of religious services was not the right way to lead nondenominational people back into church life. See: A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De preek’, *Ibid.* 1919-01 (4 January 1919), 3.

<sup>193</sup> “*Tijden lang heeft men vrij algemeen het er voor gehouden, dat er buiten de kerken geen echt godsdienstig leven kon zijn [...]. In de laatste tijden echter worden deze eens zo gediskwalificeerde buitenkerkelijke godsdiensten in eens op den troon gezet.*” Quoted from: J.J. Bleeker, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Succes of geloof?’, *Ibid.* 1919-24 (14 June 1919), 101-102, there 102.

<sup>194</sup> “*Ik beken, alle pogingen om een eeredienst te bedenken en in te richten met nieuwe rit en vormen schijnen mij ijdel. Laat liever de adem van nieuw leven door u geblazen worden door de vormen die reeds bestaan.*” Quoted from: G. Horreüs de Haas, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De toekomst van de Ned. Herv. Kerk’, *Ibid.* 1920-42 (23 October 1920), 166-167, there 167.

<sup>195</sup> H.T. de Graaf, ‘Hoofdartikel – Bondslid en kerklid’, *Ibid.* 1924-02 (12 January 1924), 10-11, there 10.

its appeal among the unchurched in general, among whom it actually wanted to recruit new members to compensate for the loss of its central position within the modernist movement.<sup>196</sup>

## 6. The Modernist Movement and Other Alternatives to Orthodoxy: An Evaluation

At the beginning of this chapter, H.G. van Wijngaarden was quoted looking back on the rather unfortunate history of the Federation of Free Religious Groups and Organisations that he had founded in 1919. The time had nonetheless seemed ripe for bringing such a federation into being. Due to a growing dissatisfaction with a purely scientific, materialistic world view on the one hand and a steadily growing amount of people who did not find spiritual satisfaction in the churches on the other, the interest in relatively new alternatives to materialism and conventional church life such as Spiritism and Theosophy increased in the *fin-de-siècle* era, also in modernist circles. Moreover, other alternatives emerged in and after the First World War. *De Nieuwe Gedachte* was one of many religious-philosophical-humanistic movements that advocated a revitalisation of European civilisation and culture through spiritual regeneration: feeling that the war had not only caused physical damage, but also spiritual wounds, which existing forms of Christianity could not cure, these movements proclaimed that the age to come was in need of a new kind of religion, based on human existence itself and hence of having universal significance.<sup>197</sup> Particularly in the theologically ‘left wing’ of the modernist movement, this message fell on fertile ground. It was no coincidence that the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, which was more or less the institutional representation of the modernist left wing, was the nerve centre of the Free Religious Federation: its then pastor Van Wijngaarden was the key figure of the federation and its building was the venue of federation meetings.

Van Wijngaarden and other liberal Protestants with an interest in Spiritism, Theosophy, *De Nieuwe Gedachte* and similar ‘little religions’ believed that the modernist movement would benefit from tightening its bonds with the adherents of these little religions, who, just as modernist themselves, for the most part belonged to the bourgeois classes. They felt that elements of little religions complemented modernism, giving what modernism itself was unable to provide, such as certainty about eternal life and a satisfactory synthesis of science and spiritual life, and hence making modernism more appealing. In their eyes, little religions were thus a positive influence on liberal Protestantism. In addition, if the modernist movement got closer to the adherents of little religions, it would, in turn, be able to exert more influence on religious life that was not confined to church life. That was especially in the interest of the NPB. Now that the exclusively Reformed VVH had emerged parallel to the NPB, and Remonstrants, Mennonites and liberal Lutherans had also begun to accentuate their denominational identity, a stronger focus on nondenominational religious life could give the NPB, which, as analysed in chapter 2, went through a severe crisis at the time, a new *raison d’être*. When Van Wijngaarden unfolded his

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<sup>196</sup> E.g.: A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Als het getij verloopt, moet men de bakens verzetten’, *Ibid.* 1918-01 (5 January 1918), 3; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Eenige beschouwingen’, *Ibid.* 1918-38 (21 September 1918), 151; [L. Knappert], ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing’, *Ibid.* 1918-44 (2 November 1918), 173-175, there 175; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – De buitenkerkelijken’, *Ibid.* 1920-25 (26 June 1920), 99; 1920-26 (3 July 1920), 103; R. Miedema, ‘Bondsleven’, *Ibid.* 1920-27 (10 July 1920), 107; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – De eerste reisbrief’, *Ibid.* 1922-26 (1 July 1922), 203-205, there 204; [A.E.F. Junod], ‘Leiding en beleid in den bond’, *Ibid.* 1926-48 (27 November 1926), 377-379, there 378; G. van Duyl, ‘Tusschen Enschede en Haarlem’, *Ibid.* 1926-48 (27 November 1926), 379.

<sup>197</sup> Brolsma, “*Het humanitaire moment*”, 4-9.

plan to bring liberal Protestants and the adherents of little religions closer together, modernists as A.H. van der Hoeve and J.A. Beijerman therefore argued that this plan could be carried out within the framework of the NPB.<sup>198</sup>

These incentives to tighten and formalise the bonds between liberal Protestants and the adherents of little religions were only in the interest of the former. Yet the main, and official, motive behind the founding of the Free Religious Federation was also in the interest of the latter. As Van Wijngaarden and his sympathisers repeatedly stressed, both groups suffered from the ostentatious display of power of ‘confessionalist’ Christians, being Roman Catholics and orthodox, particularly neo-Calvinist, Protestants. Both groups were ignored or simply overlooked. On their own, they did not have enough strength to do something about this. Accordingly, the aim of the federation to bring liberal Protestants and adherents of little religions closer together was ultimately meant to increase the visibility of ‘free’ – that is, non-confessionalist – religiosity in society as a counterbalance to the omnipresence of Roman Catholicism and neo-Calvinism, and to challenge Roman Catholics’ and neo-Calvinists’ social and political dominance.<sup>199</sup> The founding of the Free Religious Federation thus stemmed from a feeling of marginalisation and the need to counteract this marginalisation.

However, the federation met with little enthusiasm in modernist circles, and not merely because of the perceived ‘vagueness’ of the steps it wanted to take to realise its aim, as Lindeboom notices. The little religions were far too controversial to generate enough support among modernists for forging a strong alliance with their adherents. Only a minority believed that a fruitful cross-pollination between them and liberal Protestantism was possible; in *De Hervorming*, little religions were often portrayed as doctrinal, supernaturalist, autosuggestive, unsubstantiated, cultic and sometimes morally dubious. For that reason, Van der Hoeve’s and Beijerman’s plea not to found a new body, but to turn the NPB into Van Wijngaarden’s proposed federation of free religious groups and organisations was not applauded: although the NPB formally welcomed anyone who supported a free development of religious life, pro-actively incorporating adherents of little religions in its framework would have undoubtedly caused too much protest (even setting aside the question of whether those adherents would have been willing to join the NPB in the first place). In fact, Van Wijngaarden’s whole endeavour was at odds with trends in the modernist movement: the ‘ecclesial turn’ and the related rise of right-wing modernism accentuated the Christian roots of the modernist movement, causing orthodox sounding idiom as well as the institution of the church and church practices to be appreciated more than in

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<sup>198</sup> ‘Kerknieuws – Vergadering inzake kerk-organisatie’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVI.37 (7 February 1919), evening paper B, 2.

<sup>199</sup> E.g.: A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Federatie’, *De Hervorming* 1919-06 (8 February 1919), 23; H.G. van Wijngaarden, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Ontwerp-statuten van de federatie van vrije-religieuze groepen en organisaties’, *Ibid.* 1919-12 (22 March 1919), 46-47; ‘Kerkelijk leven – Wat wij willen met de Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties’, *Ibid.* 1919-21 (24 May 1919), 87; [H.G. van Wijngaarden in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Vergadering inzake kerk-organisatie’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVI.37 (7 February 1919), evening paper B, 2; [H.G. van Wijngaarden in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Federatie vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCII.29443 (7 March 1919), morning paper, 7; [A.C. Schade van Westrum in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Federatie van vrij-religieuzen’, *Ibid.* XCII.29516 (20 May 1919), morning paper, 6; [G.J. Salm in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Congres religieuze federatie’, *Ibid.* XCII.29526 (30 May 1919), evening paper, 10. As G.J. Salm (1881-1969), chairman of the Free Congregation, proclaimed, the federation intended to put the notion of synthesis, the ideal of religious brotherhood, against confessionalists’ notion of antithesis, which divided society between confessionals on the one hand and the rest of society on the other hand. See: [G.J. Salm in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Congres van de Federatie van vrij-religieuze groepen en organisaties’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVI.148 (30 May 1919), evening paper D, 2.

its earliest development phase. The modernist movement as a whole was, so to speak, moving ‘to the right’, in the direction of Christian orthodoxy, while the federation tried to steer it ‘to the left’, in a direction that would lead it somewhat away from its Christian and ecclesial patrimony.

Van Wijngaarden and his sympathisers must have seen the Free Religious Federation as a means to counteract the ‘ecclesial turn’ and to counterbalance the growing influence of right-wing modernism. Lindeboom suggests that contemporary opponents of the federation indeed suspected them thereof; after all, he writes that the federation was doomed to fail from the start, as “many felt that the persons who initially put their backs into it did not sufficiently vouch for a favourable outcome of the endeavour.”<sup>200</sup> This sentence becomes less cryptic if one takes into account that all of the strongest liberal Protestant supporters of the federation belonged to the theologically left wing of the modernist movement. The right-wing modernist majority that started to take shape apparently feared that the initiators of the federation were after a destruction of denominational life – a fear that was not unjustified, as Van Wijngaarden hoped that the federation would set in motion a partition of the existing churches into a conservative and a liberal block, and subsequently pave the way for a new religious community in which all liberals – modernists *and* the adherents of little religions – would be united.<sup>201</sup> Only a tiny minority (still) cherished this ideal. The federation therefore quickly perished, but would be revived later in the 1920s on a smaller basis, only encompassing liberal Protestant groups and organisations, in the form of the CC.

The liberal Protestant press paid much attention to the rise of little religions, but, as the fiasco of the Free Religious Federation made clear, few modernists considered this rise to be a positive development. It also took a keen interest in movements that manifested themselves within Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism, and, without breaking with the Catholic and orthodox Protestant traditions altogether, tried to reform those traditions. Most of these were initially greeted as potential allies in modernists’ pursuit of a free development of religious life. However, reports on them in the liberal Protestant press became less optimistic in due course, as modernists felt that none of them realised their potential. For instance, the second ‘Old Catholic’ wave starting in the 1870s – the first had been the emergence of a separate Old Catholic Church next to the Roman Catholic Church, following the Jansenist controversy, in the Netherlands in the early eighteenth century<sup>202</sup> – had seemed a promising reform movement in modernist eyes at first, as it arose out of rebellion against the dogma of papal infallibility. Yet, it was quickly shown to leave more of the Catholic system of dogmas intact than liberal Protestants could appreciate. Early twentieth-century Catholic modernism was not even given the opportunity to realise its potential, as Rome heavily suppressed it. Equally to liberal Protestants’ disappointment, modest

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<sup>200</sup> “...de personen, die aanvankelijk hun schouders onder het werk hadden gezet, [waren] voor velen onvoldoende waarborg voor het slagen.” Quoted from: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 102.

<sup>201</sup> ‘Kerknieuws – Vergadering inzake kerk-organisatie’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVI.37 (7 February 1919), evening paper B, 2.

<sup>202</sup> Jansenism, named after Dutch priest Cornelius Jansenius (1585-1638), emphasised predestination and the irresistibility of divine grace, and challenged papal authority. In 1713, Rome definitively condemned it as a Calvinist-like heresy. In the Dutch Republic, a controversy following the forced abdication of a Jansenist-minded vicar apostolic led to the rebellion of several Dutch clerics against Rome and the ordination of an archbishop without papal consent in 1723. From then onwards, there were two Catholic Churches in the Netherlands: one loyal to Rome and one disobeying Rome. The latter came to be known as the ‘Old Catholic Church’. A detailed history is given in: J.M. Neale, *A History of the So-Called Jansenist Church of Holland* (New York [1858] 2007).

calls for modest reform in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands did not develop into a theologically more liberal neo-Calvinist faction, yet only led to ministers being dispelled and to the formation of a tiny new denomination that was still very orthodox, the Reformed Churches in Restored Union. In religions other than Christianity, a liberal current of consequence had only developed in Hinduism, the Brahmo Samaj. Finally, modernists disappointingly noticed upon closer consideration that pedagogical reform movements that at first glance seemed to share their ideal of a free development of religious life, most notably Montessori pedagogics, interpreted the notion of ‘freedom’ in a different way than they did. In counterattacking confessionism and materialism, modernists thus continued to be left to their own devices: they ultimately rejected adherents of little religions as allies, while other potential allies with a Catholic, orthodox Protestant, non-Christian and religion-based pedagogical background did not put themselves forward. As chapter 9 analyses, they therefore decided to close their own ranks more firmly in the 1920s.

Modernists were not only confronted with developments in religious life in general, but also with trends affecting church life in particular. The growing influence of orthodoxy, dealt with in the previous chapters, was one of these trends. In addition, the numbers of so-called *randkerkelijken*, people who were members of a particular church denomination without actively participating in church life, and *buitenkerkelijken*, people without church membership at all, gradually increased. In some modernist press articles, orthodoxy and its ‘bigotry’ were blamed for this, while in others, modernists were urged to first and foremost acknowledge blame themselves. Not all lapsed churchgoers lacked religious beliefs altogether – the adherents of little religions, for example –, but some of them denied the existence of God or the realm of the spirit. These atheists, the most militant of whom were grouped around the freethinkers’ association *De Dageraad*, were chided in the modernist press for their materialistic world view, for reducing spirit to matter and attacking religious life. Moreover, as the next chapter explains, modernists closely linked belief in God to ethics, and accordingly saw atheism as a threat to public morals. Yet, they tended to believe that the amount of confirmed unbelievers among the *buitenkerkelijken* was actually marginal.

Although modernists acknowledged that religious life and church life did not coincide, being religious outside of a church context came more and more to be seen as problematic in modernist circles. While religious life that was not confined to the churches had been regarded as something worthy of bringing into blossom in the first decades of the modernist movement, the ‘ecclesial turn’ led church life to be seen as the pinnacle of religious life. As I.M.J. Hoog noticed in 1918, liberal Protestants considered their faith to be ‘superior’ to that of religious people who did not attend church, believing that religious life could not fully thrive if it was not embedded in an ecclesial setting.<sup>203</sup> In consequence, rather than enabling religious life to develop and flourish outside of the churches, leading lapsed churchgoers, whether they identified as irreligious or not, (back) to church life was acknowledged as the goal for which the modernist movement had to strive. Instead of building a new kind of community of faith, modernists felt that the churchless should be convinced of the significance of church attendance, also in an attempt to strengthen their position vis-à-vis orthodoxy in church life.

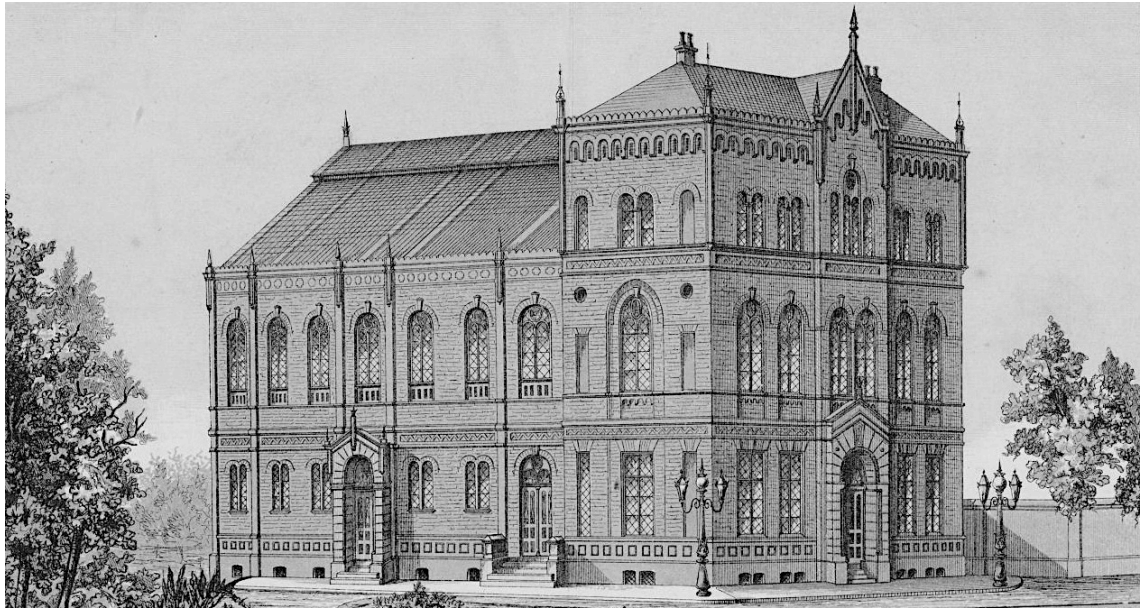
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<sup>203</sup> [I.M.J. Hoog in:] A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De vraag van den heer Taal’, *De Hervorming* 1918-12 (23 March 1918), 47. Mikkers makes a similar remark in reference to the 1937 brochure *Vrijzinnig protestantisme en onkerkelijkheid*. See: A.A.I.M. Mikkers, *Religiëstress. Hoe je te bevrijden van deze eigentijdse kwelgeest* (Zoetermeer 2012), 35.

# **PART III**

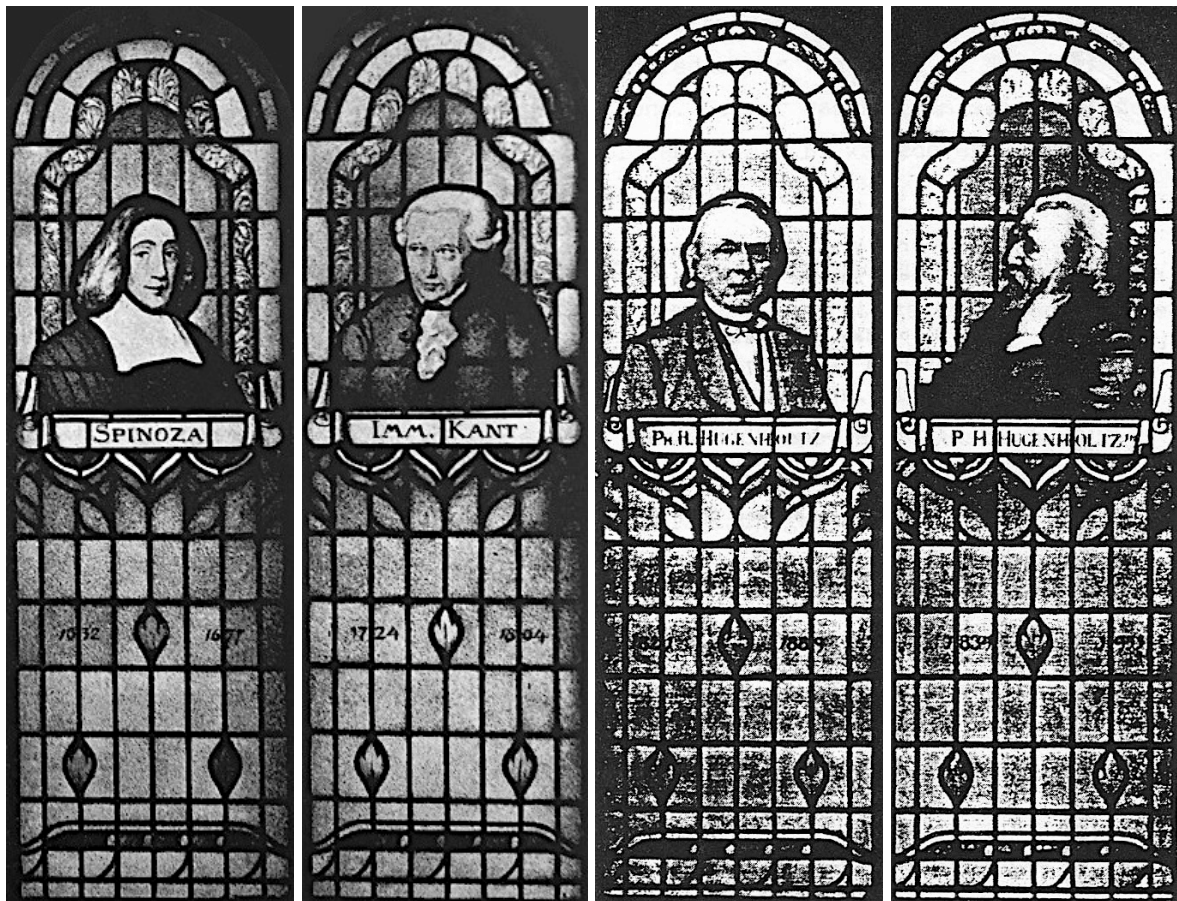
Liberal Protestant Discourse





Lithograph of the exterior of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam.

Copyright: Scheltema & Holkema, Amsterdam.



These stained-glass windows depict Spinoza (*left*), I. Kant (*centre-left*), Ph.R. Hugenholtz (*centre-right*) and P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. (*right*). The last two founded the Free Congregation in Amsterdam in 1877. Together with other stained-glass windows, depicting, amongst others, Socrates, Augustine and Theodore Parker, they were added to the building of the Free Congregation between 1897 and 1912. As argued in part III, they symbolise liberal Protestant discourse. All of the windows have been lost since the early 1970s, after the building of the Free Congregation had been transformed into cultural centre *Paradiso*.

Source: Vereeniging "De Vrije Gemeente" (s.l. s.a.), NL-AsdSAA, Vrije Gemeente, 771, inv.nr. 472.

## 6. A SPIRITUAL ARISTOCRACY OF TUTORS

### 1. Stained-Glass Windows Exemplifying Liberal Protestant Discourse

On 24 May 1879, one and a half years after the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, the first pile of the congregation's new building was driven into the ground. Architect G.B. Salm (1831-1897) designed a place of worship in an 'eclectic' style, combining early Christian and Romanesque elements, which gave expression to the religious 'eclecticism' of the Free Congregation. The building, which was explicitly called an association's building, not a church building, literally and metaphorically became a landmark of liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands after its doors were opened on 2 May 1880. Until well into the twentieth century, it would be a popular venue and conference hall for modernists.<sup>1</sup> Ironically, Salm would also design a landmark of militant anti-modernist orthodoxy in Amsterdam: the *Keizersgrachtkerk*, colloquially known as the '*kathedraal der Doleantie*' ('Kuyperian cathedral'), which opened its doors in 1888.<sup>2</sup>

On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Free Congregation, in 1897, the building was embellished with a stained-glass window representing Moses and Jesus. In a celebratory speech, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. explained that there were two principles symbolised in this window.<sup>3</sup> First, the window signified a decisive break with Protestants' innate fear of visual culture, which had originated as a response to Roman Catholic image worship and was still ubiquitous in present-day Protestantism. Second, Hugenholtz thought that a religious community should surround itself with artistic representations of its spiritual forbears. The Free Congregation acknowledged that only God is to be thanked for 'experiences of the sacred' and did therefore not want to be named after any human being – Hugenholtz was referring here to 'Lutheranism', 'Calvinism' and the like. Yet, by having a window such as the one representing Moses and Jesus, the Free Congregation indicated that it wanted to learn from people whose thoughts provided exceptional and original sources of spiritual inspiration. In accordance with the principle of religious eclecticism, meaning that not only the Old and New Testaments, but also poetry, literature and non-Christian scriptures were valued as building blocks of personal religiosity, Hugenholtz stated that the Free Congregation should install windows of great 'pagan' and other inspiring figures as well.<sup>4</sup>

His words met with approval. As early as 1898, a second window was inaugurated with portraits of Luther and Zwingli. Both sixteenth-century Reformers, Hugenholtz explained, inspired admiration for their devotion to the freedom of conscience. Although the Free Congregation had come into being as a secession from the Calvinist-based Dutch Reformed Church, Hugenholtz accentuated that Calvin did not merit inclusion, probably because liberal Protestants regarded those who claimed to be the true heirs to Calvin's spiritual legacy as

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<sup>1</sup> Meetings of modern theologians took place in the building of the Free Congregation several times. Moreover, one of the international conferences of religious liberals, with which chapter 11 deals in more detail, was held there in 1903.

<sup>2</sup> Bank and Van Buuren, 1900, 378-380.

<sup>3</sup> De Baar recognises the programmatic character of the stained-glass windows. See: De Baar, *Religie en feminisme*, 18-19.

<sup>4</sup> [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] X.I., 'Stadsnieuws – Het feest van "de Vrije Gemeente"', *De Telegraaf* V.1794 (29 November 1897), 2; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Bij de herdenking van het twintigjarig bestaan van de Vrije Gemeente', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* XX (1897), 353-373, there 366-370.



assaulters of the freedom of conscience.<sup>5</sup> In the following five years, windows were added that depicted Socrates and Marcus Aurelius (121-180), Paul and Augustine, Dante Alighieri (±1265-1321) and Thomas à Kempis (±1380-1471), Catherine of Siena (1347-1380) and Juliana of Stolberg (1506-1580), Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) and Immanuel Kant, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), and also Dutch modernists Ph.R. Hugenholtz and A.D. Loman, which demonstrates that the pastors of the Free Congregation were believed to be on a par with these world-renowned idealists and visionaries. In the build-up to the international conference of religious liberals in 1903, which was held in the building of the Free Congregation, American Unitarian Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) and Scottish philosopher Thomas Carlyle were immortalised in a stained-glass window as well. Later, this honour was also conferred upon poets Joost van den Vondel (1587-1679) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616), and, lastly, upon the recently deceased P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in 1912.<sup>6</sup>

In this way, a glass ‘hall of fame’ was built, depicting people who had distinguished themselves for their principles of life, erudition, artistic genius, ethics, and piety, and whose lives and ideas were therefore seen as eternal sources of edification. These people were, so to speak, ‘spiritual aristocrats’, who could ‘tutor’ current and future generations.<sup>7</sup> A close reading of *De Hervorming* reveals that this paradigm of a ‘spiritual aristocracy of tutors’, represented in the stained-glass windows of the Free Congregation, found expression in a discourse that implicitly permeated modernist discussions on ecclesial and social affairs. An analysis of this discourse uncovers which principles were at the bottom of modernist world views and outlooks on life. After explaining what is meant exactly by ‘the discourse of a spiritual aristocracy of tutors’, this chapter shows how this discourse was discovered while analysing *De Hervorming*, by taking two case studies. The first case study is about the discussion on lay preaching, which

<sup>5</sup> [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] ‘Stadsnieuws – Luther en Zwingli’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXI.21803 (7 February 1898), morning paper, 2.

<sup>6</sup> De Baar, *Religie en feminisme*, 18, 33, note 42; ‘Stadsnieuws – Inwijding gedenkraam P.H. Hugenholtz Jr.’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXV (22 April 1912), evening paper, 1.

<sup>7</sup> The rationale behind that was to turn people into strong personalities, to help individuals to live up to their potential. In the modernist movement, individuals were called out to ‘become what they are’. Exemplary in this respect are: [J.W. van der Linden], ‘Referaat van den heer J.W. van der Linden’, *De Hervorming* 1879-37 (13 September 1879), 145-146, there 146; [M.J. Adriani in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Alkmaar’, *Ibid.* 1881-07 (19 February 1881), 27; [A. Kuenen], ‘De rede van prof. Kuenen’, *Ibid.* 1887-45 (5 November 1887), 179; Mary, ‘Doodswijgen of protesteerden?’, *Ibid.* 1888-42 (20 October 1888), 165-166, there 166; J. Herderscheê, ‘Boete en kruis’, *Ibid.* 1889-14 (6 April 1889), 53; [M.J. Adriani in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afdeling Alkmaar’, *Ibid.* 1889-42 (19 October 1889), 167; Mary, ‘Is karakterloosheid het karakter van onzen tijd?’, *Ibid.* 1890-47 (22 November 1890), 185-186, there 186; E. Snellen, ‘Nog iets over de hooge beteekenis der persoonlijkheid in de levensopvatting van den predikant’, *Ibid.* 1893-17 (29 April 1893), 65-66; [T. Cannegieter], ‘Toespraak van prof. Cannegieter’, *Ibid.* 1906-44 (3 November 1906), 345-347, there 346; ‘Voor de week – Het oppercommando van het Goede’, *Ibid.* 1915-04 (23 January 1915), 29; [W. Banning in:] De St., ‘Leestafel – Uit de tijdschriften’, *Ibid.* 1916-36 (2 September 1916), 308-309, there 308; [K.H. Roessingh in:] G.J. Heering, ‘Hoofdartikelen – “Persoonlijkheid en cultuur”’, *Ibid.* 1916-42 (14 October 1916), 358-359; [G.J. Heering in:] M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Heering’s inaugureele oratie’, *Ibid.* 1917-19 (12 May 1917), 154-155, there 154; W. Banning, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De Woodbrookersbeweging en de kerk’, *Ibid.* 1918-46 (16 November 1918), 183; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De persoonlijkheid eischt haar oude rechten op’, *Ibid.* 1919-47 (22 November 1919), 211-212; C.B. Burger, ‘Iets over persoonlijkheid’, in: *Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond – V.C.S.B.* (Leiden 1924), 5-9; R.M.F. Houwink, ‘Vorming der persoonlijkheid en geloof als wegen tot bevrijding’, *De Smidse* V.2 (February 1930), 42-56; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Persoonlijkheid’, *Ibid.* VI.6 (June 1931), 161-166; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Gesteldheden en verwachtingen betreffende het vrijzinnig protestantisme’, *Ibid.* VIII.7/8 (July/August 1933), 193-205, there 205; J.M. de Jong, ‘De strijd om persoonlijkheid’, *Ibid.* IX.10 (October 1934), 287-295; P.H. Ronge, ‘Over de ontwikkeling van individu tot persoonlijkheid’, *Ibid.* X.4 (April 1935), 105-120.

should be read against the background of modernists' aim to 'modernise Christianity'. The second case study deals with the discussion on district nursing, which was held as part of modernists' aspiration to 'Christianise society'. While the discussion on lay preaching took place in the 1870s and after 1900, the discussion on district nursing was primarily held in the 1890s. This difference in time reflects the general development history of the Dutch modernist movement, as analysed in chapter 2. In the 1870s, ecclesial matters were at the centre of modernist debate, followed by two decades in which social issues became more prominent. Discussions on church-related affairs regained prevalence during the 'ecclesial turn' after 1900.

## 2. Defining 'Spiritual', 'Aristocrats' and 'Tutoring'<sup>8</sup>

When speaking about the particulars of an entire group, generalisations are easily made. This is especially the case when analysing the modernist movement, as those who identified themselves as 'modernists' had various conceptions of God, Jesus and the Bible, and did not all belong to the same church denomination. Speaking about the characteristics of modernists as a group is possible only on an abstract level. Nonetheless, there is something that can be said about the particulars of the modernist movement on a more concrete level. An in-depth analysis of the content of discussions on church- and society-related issues in *De Hervorming* reveals that most modernists expressed their opinions in a shared discourse, in which two notions were prominent: a strong sense of differentiation between levels of spiritual development, and the idea of learning by example. This chapter coins the term 'spiritual aristocracy' in reference to the former and refers to the latter idea as 'tutorage'. Before explicating these terms in further detail, it is necessary to keep two things in mind. First, to say that there was a dominant discourse that could be heard in modernist discussions is not to say that *every* single discussant went along with it. Second, this discourse did not lead all modernists to propose the *same* solutions and to advocate the *same* concrete initiatives. Different modernists gave different answers to the question of how 'spiritual aristocrats' should behave and act in order to 'tutor' the spiritually less developed.

Modernism was a product of its age and modernists were children of their age. Modernist thinking was therefore imbued with elements that were characteristic of (late) nineteenth-century thinking in general. Taken as a whole, modernism was rooted in an evolutionist world view and a strong belief in progress.<sup>9</sup> Scholarly findings, scientific discoveries and technological innovations fuelled the idea that mankind was evolving towards perfection, that the world was becoming a better place as time went on. Driven by optimism about the future and about mankind's possibilities, attempts were made to let as many people as possible share in these 'blessings' of the modern era. This was an endeavour not only of the elite, but even more so of the newly emerged middle classes, who could thereby distinguish themselves from the classes

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<sup>8</sup> This section is in large part based on a close reading of the entire volumes of *De Hervorming*. Most observations mentioned in this section therefore refer to articles published in this magazine. For each observation, there are many more examples to give than those mentioned in the footnotes, but only those examples are referred to in which the observation concerned clearly shines through or is clearly expressed. Moreover, examples have been chosen from years with a certain interval between them, to demonstrate that the discourse of a spiritual aristocracy of tutors was dominant throughout the *entire* period of study and not just in a particular decade.

<sup>9</sup> A good introduction in the nineteenth-century belief in 'progress' is given in the second part of: R.A. Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress* (New York [1980] 1994).

below it.<sup>10</sup> In bourgeois circles, an offensive was launched to ‘civilise’ lower-class people. The latter, it was believed, ought to be stimulated to arrange their lives in accordance with the norms and values of the classes above it and to drop outmoded views and convictions.<sup>11</sup> Modernist thinking bears the marks of all of these ingredients of this typically nineteenth-century ‘bourgeois’ outlook on life.

In line with this, a sharp differentiation between levels of spiritual development was made in modernist thinking. This division between spiritually ‘less’ and ‘more’ developed people was undeniably the dominant idea that guided modernists in their reflections on all kinds of issues and, even more significantly, that was at the bottom of the solutions modernists came up with in order to solve these issues. The adjective ‘spiritual’ (*geestelijk* in Dutch) can refer to everything related to religious life in particular as well as to everything related to the human mind in general, thus including both intelligence and morality. In modernist thinking, being cognitively, religiously and ethically ‘developed’ was synonymous to being ‘civilised’ and seen as an inextricable triad. Being developed in only one of these segments of spiritual life (cognition, religion and morals) without being equally developed in the other two, modernist opinion leaders warned, would lead to one-sidedness. Those who were intelligent while being ignorant of higher things and without having a high moral standard at the same time ran the risk of being egotistical, self-idolising, impassive singletons who neglected the riches of their inner life and the transformative power of ideals.<sup>12</sup> In *De Hervorming*, contemporary education as well as scientists and writers were repeatedly accused of having such a one-sided focus on intellectual development. Piety that was not supported by convincing, reasonable conceptions of God and not accompanied by the acknowledgement that Old Testament ethics were rooted in a ‘primitive’ outlook on life resulted

<sup>10</sup> De Regt, *Arbeidersgezinnen en beschavingsarbeid*, 246-247.

<sup>11</sup> For the Dutch context, see: B. Kruithof, ‘De deugdzame natie. Het burgerlijk beschavingsoffensief van de Maatschappij tot Nut van ’t Algemeen tussen 1784 en 1860’, *Symposium* II.1 (1980), 22-37. By spreading their own principles of life to the lower classes, the bourgeoisie tried to legitimise and consolidate its social and political influence. See: P.R.D. Stokvis, ‘Beschavingsoffensieven in de negentiende eeuw’, *De Negentiende Eeuw* XX.3 (1996), 161-162, there 162.

<sup>12</sup> E.g.: W.C. van Manen, ‘Onze leestafel – “De eenheid der wetenschap en het recht van het ideaal”’, *De Hervorming* 1879-18 (3 May 1879), 71; J. Hooykaas Herderscheê, ‘Met welke wapenen moet de levensmoeheid van velen in onzen tijd worden bestreden?’, *Ibid.* 1881-18 (7 May 1881), 70-71, there 70; [J. Boetje in:] ‘Binnenland – Jubilé van prof. Hoekstra’, *Ibid.* 1882-08 (25 February 1882), 31; A.W. van Geer, ‘Stellingen over: Godsdienstzin op de lagere school’, *Ibid.* 1887-02 (8 January 1887), 6; E. Snellen, ‘Onze zwakke zijde’, *Ibid.* 1887-43 (22 October 1887), 169-170; J. Knoppers W.Kz., ‘Over zedelijkheid en zedelijke opvoeding’, *Ibid.* 1888-52 (29 December 1888), 205-206; Mary, ‘Is karakterloosheid het karakter van onzen tijd?’, *Ibid.* 1890-47 (22 November 1890), 185-186; [J.L. Fortuyn Droogleever in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afd. Borculo’, *Ibid.* 1890-48 (29 November 1890), 191; [A. Réville in:] H. de Lang, ‘Zola en de mirakelen van Lourdes’, *Ibid.* 1892-41 (8 October 1892), 161-162; E. Snellen, ‘Gevoelsleven en gemoedsleven’, *Ibid.* 1893-05 (4 February 1893), 17-18; H., ‘Zekerheid en twijfel’, *Ibid.* 1893-12 (25 March 1893), 47; E. Snellen, ‘Eerbied’, *Ibid.* 1893-29 (22 July 1893), 113-114; G.L. van Loenen, ‘De middelweg’, *Ibid.* 1896-23 (6 June 1896), 89; Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Een compleet mensch’, *Ibid.* 1897-25 (19 June 1897), 97; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘De innerlijke tempel’, *Ibid.* 1897-31 (31 July 1897), 121; ‘Voor de week – Het hoogste wezen’, *Ibid.* 1916-19 (6 May 1916), 152; K.F. Proost, ‘Voor de week – Godskennis’, *Ibid.* 1917-05 (3 February 1917), 33; [L. Knappert in:] H. de Lang, ‘Redactioneel – De “handelingen” der algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1917-05 (3 February 1917), 36; W. Swart, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De wonderkwesie’, *Ibid.* 1918-19 (11 May 1918), 74-75; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Verstand en gevoel’, *Ibid.* 1921-35 (3 September 1921), 273-274, there 273; J. IJntema, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Godsdienstig geloof is meer dan een wereldbeschouwing’, *Ibid.* 1922-45 (11 November 1922), 355-356, there 356; E.C. Knappert, ‘Ingezonden’, *Ibid.* 1923-05 (3 February 1923), 37-38; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Om het eeuwig goed’, *Ibid.* 1923-30 (28 July 1923), 235-236, there 236.

in orthodox zealotry and blind hatred of people with different convictions.<sup>13</sup> A ‘liberal’ view of God, the Bible and the nature of man represented a higher state of believing than orthodoxy. Modernists saw intellectual, religious and ethical development as closely linked together. Generally, first-generation modernists even believed that ethics without God were simply impossible. Atheist freethinkers might claim that a *morale indépendante* existed, that ethics had nothing to do with religion, but according to modernists, they were just unwilling to acknowledge that the sense of what was ‘good’ and ‘wrong’, finding expression in the voice of conscience, is God-given.<sup>14</sup> Those who were shown to be highly developed in all three faculties united under the term ‘spiritual’ were regarded to be living at the highest level of civilisation. Referring to them, this study coins the term ‘spiritual aristocrats’.

As regards the first element that is enclosed in the adjective ‘spiritual’, namely ‘cognition’, modernists actively tried to popularise contemporary scholarly and scientific knowledge. Being seen as a powerful means to ‘civilise’ the lower classes, popular education was a subject that deeply concerned modernists.<sup>15</sup> The *Maatschappij tot Nut van ’t Algemeen*, which devoted itself

<sup>13</sup> E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Schrikwekkende onthullingen’, *Ibid.* 1883-06 (10 February 1883), 22-23, there 23; [H.C. Lohr in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Utrecht’, *Ibid.* 1882-04 (28 January 1882), 14; W. Zaalberg, ‘Godsdienstige verdraagzaamheid’, *Ibid.* 1889-22 (1 June 1889), 85-86; 1889-23 (8 June 1889), 89-90; Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Onverdraagzaamheid’, *Ibid.* 1897-02 (9 January 1897), 5-6; ‘Berichten, enz. – Orthodoxe arrogantie officieel aangemoedigd’, *Ibid.* 1903-32 (8 August 1903) 252-253; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘Over de tegenwoordige orthodoxie en orthodoxen’, *Ibid.* 1904-35 (27 August 1904), 275; L.N. de Jong, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Het vrijzinnig beginsel’, *Ibid.* 1905-24 (17 June 1905), 190; Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Errare humanum est’, *Ibid.* 1906-12 (24 March 1906), 89-90, there 90; [H.P. Schim van der Loeff in:] J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Berichten, enz. – Te Haarlem’, *Ibid.* 1911-45 (11 November 1911), 360-361, there 360; I.M.J. Hoog, ‘Dr. Slotemaker de Bruïne over de volkstelling’, *Ibid.* 1911-49 (9 December 1911), 389-390, there 390; H.W. Heuvel, ‘De “fijnen”’, *Ibid.* 1913-29 (19 July 1913), 225-226, there 225; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven – Modus vivendi of modus separandi’, *Ibid.* 1924-39 (27 September 1924), 308-309, there 308. Chapter 1 has already given examples of modernist views on Old Testament ethics.

<sup>14</sup> There was debate as to what extent religion and ethics coincided, but not a single modernist doubted that the two were very closely connected. E.g.: [H.Ph. de Kanter in:] ‘Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsch Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* 1876-11 (16 March 1876), 3; Silvanus, ‘Een gewichtig vraagstuk – ook voor de kerk?’, *Ibid.* 1876-30 (27 July 1876), 1-2, there 1; [A. Kuenen in:] ‘Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsch Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* 1877-02 (13 January 1877), 2; 1877-11 (17 March 1877), 2; [A. Kuenen in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Oud-Beijerland’, *Ibid.* 1879-30 (26 July 1879), 117-118; [B. Cuperus in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Varsseveld’, *Ibid.* 1880-49 (4 December 1880), 194; [J.A. Böhringer in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – ’s-Gravenhage’, *Ibid.* 1881-11 (19 March 1881), 42-43, there 43; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Tets over het verband van godsdienst en zedelijkheid’, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* IV (1881), 112-120; ‘Martelaarschap’, *De Hervorming* 1882-08 (25 February 1882), 29-30; L.M.B., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1888-01 (7 January 1888), 4 [this issue is erroneously dated ‘7 January 1887’]; ‘Zedelijkheid en godsdienst’, *Ibid.* 1888-48 (1 December 1888), 189; 1888-49 (8 December 1888), 193-194; 1888-50 (15 December 1888), 197-198; J.A. Helper Sesbrugger, ‘Godsdienstloos en toch...?’, *Ibid.* 1889-50 (14 December 1889), 200; W. Zaalberg, ‘De kracht van den godsdienst’, *Ibid.* 1891-16 (18 April 1891), 61; J.H. Maronier, ‘Een getuigenis’, *Ibid.* 1891-36 (5 September 1891), 143; W. Zaalberg, ‘Goed gekozen’, *Ibid.* 1895-02 (12 January 1895), 5-6, there 5; Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Geestelijke ontwrichting’, *Ibid.* 1897-27 (3 July 1897), 105; G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, ‘Voor hart en leven – Godsdienst en zedelijkheid’, *Ibid.* 1899-14 (8 April 1899), 55; [H.A. van Drooge in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afd. Dieren c.a.’, *Ibid.* 1907-07 (16 February 1907), 49; [A. Bruining in:] M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Prof. Bruining’s geschrift over onafhankelijke moraal’, *Ibid.* 1909-23 (5 June 1909), 177-178, there 178; [H.Y. Groenewegen in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afd. Middelburg’, *Ibid.* 1912-14 (6 April 1912), 105; [C. Pekelharing in:] S.K. Bakker, ‘Leestafel – “Theologisch Tijdschrift”’, *Ibid.* 1915-40 (2 October 1915), 355-356, there 356; H. Oort, ‘Hoofdartikelen – De waarde van het geloof in God’, *Ibid.* 1917-11 (17 March 1917), 86-87, there 87; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdiensten wereldbeschouwing – Godsdienst als cultuurkracht’, *Ibid.* 1920-04 (31 January 1920), 13-14, there 13.

<sup>15</sup> As Van Loenen Martinet eloquently expressed it, popular education was “one of the most powerful leverages of popular development.” (“...een der machtigste hefboomen voor volksoontwikkeling...”) Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De Onderwijs-enquête’, *Ibid.* 1890-38 (20 September 1890), 150.

to the intellectual development and moral uplift of the Dutch people by issuing brochures on all kinds of topics, founding primary schools, and establishing savings banks, was consequently fully supported in NPB circles.<sup>16</sup> The following of the *Nut* and that of the NPB overlapped to a large extent; both organisations relied on the support of the middle classes, which thought to have a crucial role in Dutch society. Lutheran minister J.A. Böhringer (1834-1911), who, as a member of the general board of the *Nut* and an active member of the NPB, epitomised the strong affinity between the two organisations, even went so far as to completely identify the fate of the *Nut* with that of the middle classes during the *Nut*'s 1884 centennial celebration: "it is chiefly the middle class that keeps up the Society's strength; the bourgeoisie is the link that brings the highest and lowest classes into contact with each other and through which a peaceful solution of social issues has to come about."<sup>17</sup> The *Nut* and the NPB both aimed at giving people more insight into present-day issues, in order to let them *consciously* make 'right' decisions in the arrangement of their lives. The way in which these organisations supplied information was therefore not value-free: the *Nut* and the NPB tried to convince their target audience of the veracity of the viewpoints they popularised. Yet, although it formally wanted to 'breed and further religious-ethical life', the *Nut* was no religious association and did not issue brochures in which theological ideas or church-related matters were dealt with.<sup>18</sup>

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the NPB therefore decided to publish brochures of its own on a regular basis, discussing religious topics and, as religion was said to be at the bottom of all current problems in society, social issues as well, from an explicitly liberal religious point of view. The series in which these brochures were initially included, called '*Geschriften uitgegeven vanwege den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond*' ('Writings Issued by the Dutch League of Protestants'), came to be split up and renamed into '*Redelijke godsdienst*' ('Reasonable Religion') and '*Voor denkende mensen*' ('For Rational People'), which were both issued between 1909 and 1914, followed by '*Onderzoekt alle dingen*' ('Prove All Things') and '*Vrij Christendom*' ('Free Christianity'), which both started and ended in 1915.<sup>19</sup> The titles given to

<sup>16</sup> E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – De algemeene vergadering der Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen', *Ibid.* 1881-33 (20 August 1881), 131; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Een nieuwe handwerkschool', *Ibid.* 1881-35 (3 September 1881), 139; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – De honderdste jaarvergadering van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen', *Ibid.* 1885-33 (15 August 1885), 130; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1890-15 (12 April 1890), 59; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Armenzorg', *Ibid.* 1891-31 (1 August 1891), 125; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1892-22 (28 May 1892), 87; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Het "Nut"', *Ibid.* 1893-17 (29 April 1893), 67; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Wetenschappelijke leergangen voor volwassenen', *Ibid.* 1899-36 (9 September 1899), 150; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Lector ten platten lande', *Ibid.* 1912-52 (28 December 1912), 421-422; C.F.A. Zernike, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Naar aanleiding van een belangrijk rapport', *Ibid.* 1918-21 (25 May 1918), 82-83; D. Drijver, 'Binnenland – Mij. tot Nut van 't Algemeen', *Ibid.* 1934-10 (22 November 1934), 75; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 50-52.

<sup>17</sup> "Het is vooral de middenstand, die de kracht der Maatschappij handhaaft, de burgerij is de schakel, die de hoogste en laagste rangen met elkaar in aanraking brengen en de vreedzame oplossing van het maatschappelijk vraagstuk mogelijk maken moet." Quoted from: [J.A. Böhringer in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Het eeuwfeest van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen', *De Hervorming* 1884-33 (16 August 1884), 132-133, there 133.

<sup>18</sup> W.H. Warnsinck Bz., 'Een woord over de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen, beschouwd als eene Christelijke vereeniging', *Vaderlandsche Letteroefeningen* LXXXI.2 (1841), 309-320, there 313-315. See also: W.C. van Manen, 'Binnenland – De godsdienst en het Nut', *De Hervorming* 1885-20 (16 May 1885), 78-79.

<sup>19</sup> The series *Geschriften*, issued in Assen, included: H. Oort, *Ons leven in God* (1902); P.B. Westerdijk, *Ons godsdienstig-zedelijk leven* (1903); C.J. Niemeijer, *Gelooven en weten* (1904); A. Bruining, *Het voortbestaan der menschelijke persoonlijkheid na den dood* (1904); L. Knappert, *Ons godsdienstonderwijs in verband met de opvoeding onzer kinderen* (1905); H. Oort, *De Bergrede* (1905); H. Oort, *Wat geloofden de Joden in den tijd van Jezus?* (1906);

the first three series are very indicative of the importance modernists attached to the advancement of intellectual life and the strong relationship they perceived between intellectual and religious life. Issuing brochures was meant to incite people to not unthinkingly accept dogmas and beliefs handed down to them by external ‘authorities’, such as ministers and confessions of faith, but to acquire, envisage and formulate their own ideas about the world surrounding them and their

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P.B. Westerdijk, *De nieuwere theosofie, van vrijzinnig-godsdienstig standpunt beoordeeld* (1906); J. Bruining Jz., *School en godsdienstige opvoeding* (1907); H. Oort and L. Knappert, *De Leidsche Vertaling van het Oude Testament* (1908). The series *Redelijke godsdienst*, issued in Baarn, comprised: S.K. Bakker, *Over de zekerheid van Gods bestaan. Een populaire beschouwing* (1909); A. Bruining, *Het geloof aan God en het zedelijk leven. Gedachten over onafhankelijke zedeleer* (1909); J.J. Meyer, *Het godsdienstig gehalte in onze nieuwe letterkunde* (1909); H.Y. Groenewegen, *De evolutieleer en het godsdienstig geloof* (1909); J.A. Bruins, *De wonderverhalen der evangeliën* (1909); C.E. Hooykaas, *Wegwijzer door den Bijbel* (1910); K. Geertsma, *Over godsdienstige opvoeding* (1910); I. van den Bergh, *Over gebedsverhooring* (1910); J. van den Bergh van Eysinga-Elias, *Eene historisch-materialistische bestrijding van het christendom* (1910); B.D. Eerdmans, “Moderne” orthodoxie of “orthodox” modernisme (1911); J.J. van Hille, *Over de pedagogische waarde van de godsdienstige voorstellingen der modernen* (1911); G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, *Kautsky’s opvatting van het oudste Christendom aan de bronnen getoetst* (1911); H. Oort, *Wat weten wij van Jezus?* (1911); J.P. Kuenen, *Natuurwetenschap en godsdienstig geloof* (1911); J.J. Meyer, *Kunst en zedelijkheid* (1912); A. Binnerts Sz., *Nieuw-gereformeerde en moderne theologie. Beschouwingen naar aanleiding van de rectorale oratie van prof. Bavinck, ter moderne theologenvergadering voorgedragen en aangevuld met een naschrift* (1912); N. Westendorp Boerma, *Geen zedelijk onderwijs* (1912); G.J. Heering, *Zonde en schuld naar christelijk besef* (1912); H. Oort, *De dwaasheid der prediking van Jezus* (1913); J. Bruining Jz., *De verhouding tusschen geloofsleven en geschiedenis* (1913); M. Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending, toegelicht voor vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen* (1913); B.D. Eerdmans, *Het Roomsche gevaar* (1913); H.A. van Bakel, *De oorsprong van den christelijken doop* (1913); A.H. van der Hoeve, *De invloed van de maatschappelijke omstandigheden op het geestelijk leven* (1913); I.M.J. Hoog, *De voornaamste rechtsche- en middenrichtingen in het Nederlandsche protestantisme van onzen tijd. Orthodoxie, Groninger (evangelische) richting, gematigde orthodoxie, ethische richting* (1914); G.J. Heering, *Het geloof in Gods voorzienigheid* (1914); J. Groenewoud Kzn. [H.G. Cannegieter], *De tempel des hemels* (1914); G. Horreüs de Haas, *De belijdenisquaestie in de Ned. Herv. Kerk* (1914); A.W. van Wijk, *Eenheid en vrijheid in kerk en maatschappij* (1914); H.T. de Graaf, *Geloof en misdaad* (1914). The series *Voor denkende mensen*, issued in Baarn, included: H. Bakels, *Mensch of dier?* (1909); H.P. Schim van der Loeff, *De antithese* (1909); C.G. Chavannes, *Hel en hemel* (1910); A. Bakker-Germs, *Godsdienst in het huisgezin* (1910); G.J. Heering, *Gij zijt verantwoordelijk!* (1910); A.H. van der Hoeve, *Zal de godsdienst verdwijnen? De beweringen van het historisch materialisme wêrlegd* (1910); J. van Loenen Martinet, *De eed veroordeeld!* (1910); J. Bruining Jz., *Wat wij wel en wat wij niet gelooven* (1910); H.G. Cannegieter, *Moeten wij nog bidden?* (1910); F. Reitsma, *Godsdienst en maatschappij* (1910); L.A. Bähler, *De levende God* (1911); F.S. Knipscheer, *Hoe Rome over de protestanten dacht en denkt* (1911); H.T. de Graaf, *Gelooven en weten* (1911); L.N. de Jong, *Vrije vroomheid. Aard, grondslag en praktijk van het vrijzinnig-godsdienstig leven* (1911); H.P. Schim van der Loeff, *Jezus Christus* (1912); C.E. Hooykaas, *Wij modernen en de openbaring* (1912); W. Haverkamp, *Wij zijn niet geboren om te sterven* (1912); J.J. Bleeker, *Wat is het doel van het leven?* (1912); H.G. Cannegieter, *Godsdienst en beeldendienst* (1912); S.K. Bakker, *Godsdienst en godsdiensten* (1912); K. Vos, *Neef Jan’s bekeering* (1913); H. Oort, *Inleiding op den Bijbel in de tekstuittgave der Leidsche Vertaling* (1913); H. Eisma, *Naar de kerk?! Een leekenwoord* (1913); S.K. Bakker, *Als er een God was ... Enkele gedachten over het lijden en het kwaad in de wereld* (1913); J. Bruining Jz., *Godsdienst en clericalisme* (1913); H.P. Schim van der Loeff, *Naar de catechisatie* (1914); K. Geertsma, *God en de oorlog* (1914); P. Eldering, *Het eeuwig leven* (1914); D. Drijver, *Lijkverbranding* (1914); M.C. van Wijhe, *Waarheid in gelijkenissen* (1914). The series *Onderzoekt alle dingen*, issued in Zaltbommel in 1915, included: W. Meindersma, *Geest en hoofdzaak*; P. van der Meulen, *De kerk en de oorlog*; I.M.J. Hoog, *De doode letter*; W. Haverkamp, *Zondagsviering*; W. Swart, *Het oude geloof en de nieuwe tijd*. The series *Vrij Christendom*, also issued in Zaltbommel in 1915, consisted of: C.E. Hooykaas, *Gemeenteleven*; L. Knappert, *Oostersch fatalisme*; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *De orthodoxe en moderne geloofsprediking uit psychologisch oogpunt vergeleken*; J.J. van Hille, *Over ascetisme*; H.U. Meyboom, *Geestelijk voedsel en surrogaten*.

The price of the brochures issued in the series *Geschriften* ranged from f 0.45 to f 0.75. The brochures in the series *Redelijke godsdienst* were issued at f 0.40 apiece. One could take out a subscription to ten brochures in this series at f 3.00. The brochures in the series *Voor denkende mensen* and those in the series *Onderzoekt alle dingen* cost f 0.10 each. The price of a brochure issued in the series *Vrij Christendom* was f 0.40. It was possible to subscribe to the last two series at f 0.50 and f 1.50 respectively. All brochures were available on request. The series *Geschriften* was primarily meant for NPB members. Particularly the cheapest series (*Voor denkende mensen* and *Onderzoekt alle dingen*) were used as means to propagate liberal Protestantism among non-modernists as part of the so-called ‘postpropaganda’ of the NPB, about which more is said in chapter 11.

own conceptions of God. The titles of the NPB brochure series implied that only liberal religious ideas and principles deserved to be called 'reasonable', thereby at the same disqualifying orthodox ideas and principles as 'unreasonable'. They suggest that no one who *rationaly* reflected upon religion would ever arrive at orthodox viewpoints. Having liberal religious ideas was thus a sign of a 'higher' state of spiritual development. It was modernists' vocation to let the state of spiritual development in Dutch society increase.

The strong link existing in modernist thinking between intellectual development and religious conceptions played an important role in discussions on the question of how the lowest classes could and should be reached. Modernists perceived that poorly educated low-class people tended to be either orthodox or religiously indifferent.<sup>20</sup> Spreading modernist ideas among them should therefore be accompanied by giving them intellectual training. To their amazement, modernists also noticed that orthodoxy and ignorance were not necessarily two sides of the same coin. Although neo-Calvinism was highly intellectualistic, modernists could not understand how someone as intelligent as Kuyper could cling to religious beliefs that modern theology had relegated to the realm of fantasy.<sup>21</sup> They were equally puzzled by the conversions of several public figures to Roman Catholicism in the early twentieth century. They could see that the Roman Catholic Church exerted some attraction because of its devotional and sacramental character, but could not grasp why intelligent people voluntarily pushed their reason aside by embracing the most 'nonsensical' dogmas.<sup>22</sup> Here, a paradox became manifest. Contrary to modernism, neo-Calvinism and Roman Catholicism were well-constructed theological *systems*. As regards *structure*, these systems had an intellectualistic character, as every dogma perfectly related to all other dogmas, while all dogmas combined formed a world view that was, in itself, a logical unity. In modernist eyes, this could blind even intelligent people to the fact that the *content* of these systems, taken as a whole, made no sense.<sup>23</sup> For that reason, and also to counteract religious

<sup>20</sup> E.g.: 'Waarom is de "mindere man" orthodox?', *De Hervorming* 1874-26 (25 June 1874), 2; M.A. de Jong, 'Ingezonden stukken – De taak der kerk', *Ibid.* 1878-01 (5 January 1878), 3-4, there 4; J. Rinner, 'Verheffing van het godsdienstonderwijs', *Ibid.* 1880-24 (12 June 1880), 94; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Het verstand van arme mensen', *Ibid.* 1893-38 (23 September 1893), 149-150, there 150; W.C. van Manen, '1869 – Januari – 1894', *Ibid.* 1894-04 (27 January 1894), 14-15, there 14; R.J. van der Meulen, 'Ingezonden stukken – Hervormde Hollanders in Duitschland', *Ibid.* 1902-02 (11 January 1902), 13; G. Heuvelman, 'Ingezonden – Nog eens: theosophie', *Ibid.* 1916-32 (5 August 1916), 274; J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Wat mankeert er toch aan ons?', *Ibid.* 1917-05 (3 February 1917), 35-36, there 35; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Onkerkelijk of ongodsdienstig?', *Ibid.* 1917-09 (3 March 1917), 70; W. Drop, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Nieuwe geest in nieuwen tijd', *Ibid.* 1921-26 (2 July 1921), 203-204, there 204.

<sup>21</sup> E.g.: A.F. Mackensteen, 'Kroniek', *Ibid.* 1873-33 (14 August 1873), 3; A. Admiraal, 'Leekenlektuur', *Ibid.* 1875-09 (4 March 1875), 1. Decades later, the attraction orthodoxy managed to exert was explained in psychological terms in modernist circles, by making a distinction between people with and people without a 'mass mentality'. Exemplary is: Van Mourik Broekman, *De orthodoxe en moderne geloofsprediking uit psychologisch oogpunt vergeleken*.

<sup>22</sup> E.g.: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Redelijk gelooven', *De Hervorming* 1921-05 (5 February 1921), 34-35; L. Knappert, 'Kerkelijk leven – Roomsche worden', *Ibid.* 1922-08 (25 February 1922), 60-61. In a letter that Van Mourik Broekman discussed in *De Hervorming* in 1925, a Catholic convert explained that because of its system of dogmas, Roman Catholicism enabled someone to make more sense of the world than modernism did. Roman Catholicism thus seemed to be more 'plausible' in his eyes than modernism. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Een overgang tot het katholicisme', *Ibid.* 1925-33 (15 August 1925), 259-261; 1925-34 (22 August 1925), 268-269.

<sup>23</sup> E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], "'Moeilijkheden'", *Ibid.* 1904-51 (17 December 1904), 401-402, there 402; G.J. Heering, 'Hoofdartikelen – Een vriend, die onze feiten toont... en onze deugden', *Ibid.* 1915-40 (2 October 1915), 350-351, there 350; Van Mourik Broekman, *De orthodoxe en moderne geloofsprediking uit psychologisch oogpunt vergeleken*, 8-9, 22; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – Rome en Dordt', *De Hervorming* 1918-49 (7 December 1918), 194-195, there 195; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Ons calvinistisch volksdeel', *Ibid.* 1920-46 (20 November 1920), 181-182, there 181; T. Cannegieter, *Protestantsch geloofsbezit en roomsche kerk-*

indifference, modernists devoted much effort to propagandising their ideas, in an attempt to show their theological superiority over orthodoxy in its Protestant and Catholic manifestations, not only among the lowest classes, but also among the higher classes.<sup>24</sup>

In English, the word ‘mind’ can refer to the intellect (‘*verstand*’ in Dutch), but also to feelings, introspection and sensory experiences (‘*gemoed*’). In modernist thinking, it was deemed important to be ‘developed’ in both realms of the mind: in the realm of the *verstand* and in the realm of the *gemoed*. This relates to the second element that is enclosed under the term ‘spiritual’, namely ‘religion’ in the sense of piety. Although the image of first-generation modernism as being intellectualistic – an image that was strengthened by malcontents after 1900 – is not completely groundless, the earliest modernists were in fact, just as later generations of modernists, deeply concerned with the inner, emotional life. Modern theology not only necessitated a reformation of religious imagery, terminology and concepts, but was also seen as a stimulus for a regeneration of piety.<sup>25</sup> It shed a bright light on the *true* message of the Bible and hence exposed the *true* principles of life contained in Old and New Testament texts. These principles, particularly expressed in the life of Jesus, should be internalised in order for them to be the foundation of all thoughts and deeds. This was the true meaning of ‘piety’: living in accordance with the principles with which the spirit of Jesus (and others with a highly developed inner life) was suffused, recognising that these principles have a divine origin, and being grateful for living in close harmony with God.<sup>26</sup>

‘Free piety’ (‘*vrije vroomheid*’) was the ideal that the NPB had in mind.<sup>27</sup> In the modernist movement, many voices could be heard in which concern about the level of piety in Dutch society was expressed. For several reasons, free piety could not flourish. In orthodox

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*leer* (Haarlem 1922), 19; J. Lindeboom, *De psychologische beteekenis der richtingsverschillen* (Baarn 1924), 39. Neo-Calvinists were said to have accepted at least part of the outlook on life that modernists openly embraced.

<sup>24</sup> As the difference in price of brochures issued in both of these series evinces, the series *Redelijke godsdienst* targeted the more developed, while the series *Voor denkende mensen* was meant for the less developed. Mentioned in: G.J. Heering, ‘Dr Cornelis Elias Hooykaas’, in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1933-1934 II* (Leiden 1934), 67-78, there 73.

<sup>25</sup> Some modernists went as far as to claim that modern theology itself had come into being out of a desire for a regeneration of piety. Herderscheê, for example, stated that the modernist movement should be seen as an effusion, and that modern theology was the further consideration, foundation and justification thereof. Hence, the modernist movement was not the consequence of modern theology, but rather the opposite. See: [J. Herderscheê], ‘Replik’, *De Hervorming* 1905-24 (17 June 1905), 186-187, there 187.

<sup>26</sup> E.g.: B. Tideman Jz., ‘Een goed werk’, *Ibid.* 1876-01 (6 January 1876), 2-3; ‘Geestelijke erfenis’, *Ibid.* 1879-32 (9 August 1879), 125-126; ‘Och of gij koud waart of heet!’, *Ibid.* 1879-36 (6 September 1879), 141; [A.W. van Wijk in:] ‘De beteekenis der moderne richting voor onzen tijd’, *Ibid.* 1882-17 (29 April 1882), 66; B. Tideman Jz., ‘Onze leestafel – Miskennen’, *Ibid.* 1883-17 (28 April 1883), 68; [N.J. Krom in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – ’s-Hertogenbosch’, *Ibid.* 1884-01 (5 January 1884), 2; B. Tideman Jz., ‘Voor alles goed’, *Ibid.* 1889-01 (5 January 1889), 1-2, there 1; W. Zaalberg, ‘Oud en afgezaagd – toch herhaald’, *Ibid.* 1891-37 (12 September 1891), 147-148; E. Snellen, ‘Gode bevolen’, *Ibid.* 1893-08 (25 February 1893), 29-30; E. Snellen, ‘Bergopwaarts’, *Ibid.* 1894-39 (29 September 1894), 153-154; Censor [A. Carlier], ‘De hoogste schoonheid’, *Ibid.* 1899-34 (26 August 1899), 141; H.L. Oort, ‘Onze vereeniging’, *Ibid.* 1899-45 (11 November 1899), 185; [L. Knappert], ‘Over het persoonlijke in de prediking’, *Ibid.* 1902-02 (11 January 1902), 9-10; L.N. de Jong, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Het vrijzinnig beginsel’, *Ibid.* 1905-24 (17 June 1905), 190; W.H. Stenfert Kroese, ‘Toespraak van W.H. Stenfert Kroese’, *Ibid.* 1907-43 (26 October 1907), 337-339; 1907-44 (2 November 1907), 346-347; H.R. Offerhaus, ‘Een nieuw art. 1’, *Ibid.* 1908-24 (13 June 1908), 187; De Jong, *Vrije vroomheid*; G.J. Heering, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Een vriend, die onze feiten toont... en onze deugden’, *De Hervorming* 1915-40 (2 October 1915), 350-351; [H.Y. Groenewegen in:] ‘Mededeelingen – Wassenaar’, *Ibid.* 1924-49 (6 December 1924), 390.

<sup>27</sup> Because, as H.G. Hagen eloquently formulated it, “true piety can only breathe in the atmosphere of freedom” (“...alleen in den dampkring der vrijheid kan de ware vroomheid ademen”). Quoted from: H.G. Hagen, ‘Toespraak’, *Ibid.* 1892-44 (29 October 1892), 173-174, there 174.



circles, there was a persistent misconception about the true nature of piety; there, being ‘pious’ was equated with venerating Jesus, clinging to the word of Scripture, and agreeing to creeds.<sup>28</sup> Consequently, orthodoxy regarded every rejection or even nuancing of the idea that Jesus was the Son of God, that the authority of Scripture was non-debatable, and that sixteenth-century creeds were the purest formulations of the Christian religion as a subversion of piety, and tried everything it could to extinguish such ‘impiety’. However, in modernist eyes, piety had to do with an inner disposition, with susceptibility for impressions of the divine and a cheerful reverence for God. Next to the orthodox misinterpretation of piety, there was a tendency in modern culture to grossly neglect the significance of devoutness, a tendency over which modernists repeatedly lamented. On the one hand, orthodoxy was to blame: because orthodoxy defined being pious as endorsing certain creeds and a certain interpretation of the Bible, people who could no longer accept these creeds and this interpretation often lost their religious faith altogether.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, the materialistic philosophy of life that had emerged in the course of the nineteenth century fostered religious indifference: those who were intellectually highly developed and who should set the standard for society as a whole did not show as much interest in religious matters as modernists wished.<sup>30</sup> The modernist movement itself was not free of indifference either: already before the rise of malcontentism, complaints about a lack of piety among modernists were uttered.<sup>31</sup> ‘Free piety’ was clearly an ideal hard to attain.

<sup>28</sup> E.g.: [R.T.H.P.L.A. van Boneval Faure in:] ‘Twaalfde algemeene vergadering van den Ned. Prot. Bond, gehouden te Groningen 30 en 31 October 1882’, *Ibid.* 1882-44 (4 November 1882), 173-175, there 175; [Ph.R. Hugenholtz in:] ‘Twaalfde algem. vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenvbond’, *Ibid.* 1882-47 (25 November 1882), 185-186, there 185; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Schrikwekkende onthullingen’, *Ibid.* 1883-06 (10 February 1883), 22-23, there 23; J.E.M., ‘Catholicisme en protestantisme’, *Ibid.* 1889-37 (14 September 1889), 145-146; H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, ‘Rechtzinnigheid’, *Ibid.* 1896-19 (9 May 1896), 73-74; H.L. Oort, ‘Onze vereeniging’, *Ibid.* 1899-45 (11 November 1899), 185; W. Meindersma, ‘Leestafel – Onze roeping’, *Ibid.* 1903-22 (30 May 1903), 174; [C.J. Niemeijer in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Vrijzinnige hervormden in Friesland’, *Ibid.* 1905-32 (12 August 1905), 251-252, there 251; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Zondebewustzijn’, *Ibid.* 1910-27 (2 July 1910), 210-211, there 210; [D.E.W. van Weel in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Tegen confessioneel drijven’, *Ibid.* 1913-29 (19 July 1913), 227-228; J.J. Bleeker, ‘Waardeering van andersdenkenden’, *Ibid.* 1914-26 (27 June 1914), 221-222, there 221; L.N. de Jong, ‘Het wezen der vroomheid’, *Ibid.* 1915-50 (11 December 1915), 451-452. As K. Vos felt, Kuypersians’ ‘misconception’ of piety had ‘ruined’ more pious souls than any other sin whatsoever. See: K. Vos, ‘Een teeken des tijds’, *Ibid.* 1912-05 (3 February 1912), 33-34, there 34.

<sup>29</sup> E.g.: W. Zaalberg, ‘Staat in de vrijheid’, *Ibid.* 1886-09 (27 February 1886), 33-34; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Wat wonder?’, *Ibid.* 1891-33 (15 August 1891), 134; Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Wee der orthodoxie!’, *Ibid.* 1894-06 (10 February 1894), 22-23, there 22; J.M.A.C., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Verantwoording’, *Ibid.* 1897-21 (22 May 1897), 83; S. Cramer, ‘De geschiedkennis van dr. Kuiper in de Tweede Kamer’, *Ibid.* 1904-05 (30 January 1904), 33-34, there 34; ‘Uit “de Hollandsche Lelie”’, *Ibid.* 1905-26 (1 July 1905), 201-203, there 202; I.M.J. Hoog, ‘Dr. Slotemaker de Bruïne over de volkstelling’, *Ibid.* 1911-49 (9 December 1911), 389-390, there 390; ‘Berichten, enz. – Van onzen minister-president’, *Ibid.* 1914-29 (18 July 1914), 250-251, there 251; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Hoofdartikel – De uitslag der volkstelling’, *Ibid.* 1922-38 (23 September 1922), 297-298, there 298. Chapter 5 has dealt with this matter in more detail.

<sup>30</sup> E.g.: ‘Volharden’, *Ibid.* 1878-35 (31 August 1878), 1; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Reclame-artikel’, *Ibid.* 1884-11 (15 March 1884), 44-45; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr.], ‘Binnenland – In de “Vrije Gemeente”’, *Ibid.* 1887-50 (10 December 1887), 199; E. Snellen, ‘Ontnuchtering of geestdrift?’, *Ibid.* 1889-35 (31 August 1889), 137-138, there 137; F. Pijper, ‘De toekomst der vrijzinnige richting’, *Ibid.* 1890-01 (4 January 1890), 1-2, there 2; X., ‘Toynbee-werk’, *Ibid.* 1896-04 (25 January 1896), 13-14, there 14; Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Geestelijke ontwrichting’, *Ibid.* 1897-27 (3 July 1897), 105; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Redactioneel – ‘t Doel van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond’, *Ibid.* 1916-48 (25 November 1916), 416-417, there 417; H. Oort, ‘Hoofdartikelen – De waarde van het geloof in God’, *Ibid.* 1917-11 (17 March 1917), 86-87, there 86.

<sup>31</sup> E.g.: [M. Wijt in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Knijpe’, *Ibid.* 1878-51 (21 December 1878), 1-2; [H.U. Meyboom in:] ‘Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenvbond’, *Ibid.* 1884-46 (15 November 1884), 183; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Vergadering van moderne theologen’, *Ibid.* 1899-15 (15 April 1899), 57;

The importance modernists attached to piety found expression in an animated singing culture. As mentioned in chapter 4, the NPB issued a hymnbook in 1882, which quickly gained popularity in modernist circles – NPB branches and many modernist-oriented church congregations made use of it during their religious services – and came to be revised in 1920. Hymns were regarded as the pre-eminent vehicles to give vent to the deepest stirrings of the human soul (*'gemoedservaringen'*).<sup>32</sup> As the preface to the NPB hymnbook of 1882 formulated it: music has the power to elevate humans to “higher things, the ideal and the invisible, and hence to religious feelings.” A hymn “should be the purest and most beautiful expression of the most sacred and most tender emotions, stirred up inside us by the deeper understanding of religion.”<sup>33</sup> This ‘deeper understanding of religion’ referred to modernists’ firm conviction that the individual *gemoed* is the ultimate judge of religious truth. Although *licentia poetica* was permitted, hymns ought not to express religious experiences in words that could only be made sense of in the context of an outmoded, supernaturalist world view. Free piety, as NPB pastor L.N. de Jong (1869-1937) explained, could not do without “a rational verbalisation.”<sup>34</sup>

Inner life was not only believed to be deeply intertwined with intellectual life, but also, and this relates to the third constituent of the word ‘spiritual’, with ethical life. Although far from all modernists went as far as to claim that morality and religion are synonymous, the frequent use of the term ‘religious-ethical life’ evinces that morality (*'zedelijkheid'* in Dutch) and piety, or religion, were regarded to be closely connected. The general feeling in modernist circles was that a correct interpretation of what ‘morality’ is depends on a correct understanding of what ‘piety’ is.<sup>35</sup> Non-liberal Christians, non-Christians and atheists could lead honest, sincere and virtuous lives. Yet, the first failed to recognise that the Bible, taken literally in its entirety or read through a dogmatic lens, also contains rather barbarian morals; the second did not see that the Christian religion is the basis of morality in its purest form; and the third were unwilling to acknowledge that morality does not exist (entirely) independently of God. Modernists believed that the principles of morality are entrenched in man’s conscience. Again, not all of them were as decisively to equate the voice of conscience with the voice of God, but they agreed that the ethical principles expressed in the human conscience are, in one way or another, related to God.<sup>36</sup>

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H.L. Oort, ‘Vroomheid’, *Ibid.* 1901-42 (19 October 1901), 330; E.M. ten Cate, ‘Door de woestijn’, *Ibid.* 1907-29 (20 July 1907), 225-226, there 225; K., ‘Berichten, enz. – Uit “de Vrije Gemeente”’, *Ibid.* 1908-07 (15 February 1908), 52-53, there 53.

<sup>32</sup> Le Coq, *Wat vlied’ of bezwijk*, 35-38. See also: ‘Godsdienstige opvoeding’, *De Hervorming* 1880-35 (28 August 1880), 137-138, there 138; ‘Onze liederenbundel’, *Ibid.* 1886-42 (16 October 1886), 167-168; [G. Heuvelman in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Zingen’, *Ibid.* 1900-46 (17 November 1900), 356-357.

<sup>33</sup> “...hoogere, ideale en onzichtbare, dus tot godsdienstige gevoelens.”; “...de reinste en schoonste uiting moeten zijn van de heiligste en teederste aandoeningen, door de diepere opvatting van den godsdienst in ons gewekt.” Quoted in: Le Coq, *Wat vlied’ of bezwijk*, 35-36. See also: ‘Onze liederenbundel’, *De Hervorming* 1886-42 (16 October 1886), 167-168.

<sup>34</sup> “...verstandelijke inkleeding...” Quoted from: L.N. de Jong, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Het vrijzinnig beginsel’, *Ibid.* 1905-24 (17 June 1905), 190.

<sup>35</sup> E.g.: Hugenholtz, *Het kenmerkende der moderne richting*, 35; ‘Zedelijkheid en godsdienst’, *De Hervorming* 1888-50 (15 December 1888), 197-198; B. Tideman Jz., ‘Voor alles goed’, *Ibid.* 1889-01 (5 January 1889), 1-2; W. Zaalberg, ‘Goed gekozen’, *Ibid.* 1895-02 (12 January 1895), 5-6, there.

<sup>36</sup> E.g.: ‘Godsdienstige opvoeding’, *Ibid.* 1880-37 (11 September 1880), 146; Ph.R. Hugenholtz, ‘Onze leestafel – “De zedekunde als wetenschap”’, *Ibid.* 1880-42 (16 October 1880), 167; ‘Het geheim van de rechte verhouding tusschen ouders en kind’, *Ibid.* 1882-03 (21 January 1882), 9; [J. Knappert in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Deventer’, *Ibid.* (4 February 1882), 19; “Laat de dooden hunne dooden begraven”, *Ibid.* 1883-49 (8 December 1883), 195; Z., ‘Snippers – Geweten’, *Ibid.* 1884-32 (9 August 1884), 127-128, there 127; R., ‘Alles betrekkelijk?’, *Ibid.*

No one had the right to restrain someone else's conscience. The importance modernists attached to the freedom of conscience, the protection of which they, as chapter 3 has shown, considered to be their most important identity marker, is evinced by, among other things, the initial name given to the NPB, '*Gewetensvrijheid*'.

This is not to say that modernists thought that the human conscience was always working 'as it should be' in each individual case.<sup>37</sup> Far from it – just as there was much concern in modernist circles about the level of piety in Dutch society, there was also much concern about the level of public morality and behaviour. Someone's conscience could 'go astray' if it was not 'developed' enough, or if the interplay of intellect, heart and conscience was not optimal. Someone with orthodox and hence, from a modernist point of view, intellectually 'less' developed conceptions of God, for example, could feel it as a call of conscience to deny people with other convictions the right to freely profess their faith.<sup>38</sup> In that case, intolerance was seen as conscientiousness, because of a misunderstanding of what 'piety' was. Moreover, not everyone had the ability to listen to and act in accordance with the voice of conscience. Two reasons were responsible for this. First, because morality was intertwined with intelligence and piety, not everyone was as capable of separating 'ethical' from 'unethical' behaviour. Second, and often

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1888-11 (17 March 1888), 41-42; J. Herderscheë, 'Het geweten', *Ibid.* 1888-12 (24 March 1888), 45-46; D. André de la Porte, 'Hebben de modernen, voor de godsdienstige vorming hunner kinderen, hulp te zoeken bij de voorstellingen der orthodoxie?', *Ibid.* 1888-18 (5 May 1888), 69-70; J.E.M., 'Catholicisme en protestantisme', *Ibid.* 1889-37 (14 September 1889), 145-146; W. Zaalberg, 'Oud en afgezaagd – toch herhaald', *Ibid.* 1891-37 (12 September 1891), 147-148; G.L. van Loenen, 'De middelweg', *Ibid.* 1896-23 (6 June 1896), 89; W. Zaalberg, 'Op den Hervormingsdag', *Ibid.* 1897-45 (6 November 1897), 177; F.C. Fleischer, 'Het openbare kerkelijke gebed', *Ibid.* 1898-33 (13 August 1898), 131-132; W. Zaalberg, 'Christelijke beginselen en levenspraktijk', *Ibid.* 1899-05 (4 February 1899), 17-18; W. Zaalberg, 'Het Woord Gods', *Ibid.* 1904-06 (6 February 1904), 41-42; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Niet geruststellend', *Ibid.* 1906-36 (8 September 1906), 283-284; 'God in ons', *Ibid.* 1908-23 (6 June 1908), 177-178; P.H. Hugenoltz, Jr., 'Een vroom pantheïst', *Ibid.* 1910-10 (5 March 1910), 74-75; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Kansel en geweten', *Ibid.* 1915-32 (7 August 1915), 278-280; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Het persoonlijk geweten en de bestaande ordeningen', *Ibid.* 1916-09 (26 February 1916), 71-72; [F.L. Ortt], 'Voor de week – Ons geweten en de liefdedrang', *Ibid.* 1916-38 (16 September 1916), 321-322; J. van Rees-van Nauta Lemke, 'De stem God's in ons geweten', *Ibid.* 1920-02 (17 January 1920), 5-6; H. Oort, 'Hoofdartikel – Doe nimmer iets tegen uw geweten', *Ibid.* 1921-26 (2 July 1921), 201-203; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Heilige Geest', *Ibid.* 1922-22 (3 June 1922), 169-171; [G. Hulsman in:] A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Boekaankondiging – "Predikatie"', *Ibid.* 1923-07 (17 February 1923), 53; P. Eldering, 'Vrijheid en waarheid', *Ibid.* 1926-46 (13 November 1926), 364-365; H. Behrns, 'Het geweten', *Ibid.* 1926-52 (25 December 1926), 410-411. Although he did not go as far as to claim that ethics and religion were fundamentally one, H.T. de Graaf did argue that "only when moral man and mankind reach their destiny in God does the desire to be morally good become [utterly] decisive in man's life." ("...daar eerst, waar de zedelijke mensch en menschheid als bestemming in God zijn grond vindt, wordt de zedelijke wilsrichting het beslissende in des menschen leven.") Quoted from: H.T. de Graaf, *Godsdienst en zedelijkheid. Rede, uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van het bijzonder hoogleraar vanwege het Haagsch Genootschap ter Verdediging van den Christelijken Godsdienst, te Utrecht op 8 October 1924* (Arnhem 1924), 29.

<sup>37</sup> Exemplary in this respect is what J. Herderscheë wrote in 1888: every human being has the same conscience, as the voice of conscience is the voice of God. Yet, it is a difference in moral development and ignorance that hinders some from listening to this voice. "For that reason, it is a plight to take this ignorance away, [...] to [bring people's moral development] more and more in accordance with that of the best of our generation." ("*Daarom is het plicht die onkunde weg te nemen, [...] in overeenstemming worde het meer en meer gebracht met dat der besten van ons geslacht.*") See: J. Herderscheë, 'Het geweten', *De Hervorming* 1888-12 (24 March 1888), 45-46. The quote is on p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> E.g.: [Ph.R. Hugenoltz in:] W. de Meijer, 'Open brief aan ds. Ph.R. Hugenoltz', *Ibid.* 1875-03 (21 January 1875), 1-2; [F.W.N. Hugenoltz, Sr.], 'De synode der Ned. Herv. Kerk in 1878', *Ibid.* 1878-37 (14 September 1878), 2; [H. Koekebakker in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Wolvega', *Ibid.* 1879-14 (5 April 1879), 56; [F.W.N. Hugenoltz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Aanmatiging in de Ned. Herv. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1883-24 (16 June 1883), 94; 'Binnenland – De Ned. Herv. Kerk en de proponentsformule', *Ibid.* 1884-02 (12 January 1884), 7; N.J. Telders, 'Zonderlinge opvatting van gewetensvrijheid', *Ibid.* 1898-23 (4 June 1898), 92; 'Berichten, enz. – Orthodoxe arrogantie officieel aangemoedigd', *Ibid.* 1903-32 (8 August 1903), 252-253.

in combination with the first reason, the voice of conscience could be ‘drowned out’ or ‘silenced’ by, for example, alcohol abuse (causing an individual to lose self-control), widespread extenuation of licentiousness (a persistent double moral standard in sexual matters) or inappropriate literature.

These influences, extraneously affecting an individual’s sense of morality, could give people the impression that certain behaviour was ‘acceptable’, when in fact it was not. In the modernist movement, many voices were therefore raised against excessive consumption of alcohol and against prostitution, while nowadays highly acclaimed novels were not infrequently subjected to fierce criticism.<sup>39</sup> After all, although aesthetics – composition, originality, vocabulary and character description – were seen as an important aspect of literature, modernist critics tended to ultimately base their opinion of a book on its moral content. If its protagonists lacked piety and a conscientious attitude to life, or if its author did not have the intention to edify his readership, a book generally received a negative review in *De Hervorming*.<sup>40</sup> Contrary to the naturalistic depictions and morally unstable, wicked or irreligious personages in (some of) the works of contemporary bellettrists, people should not be exposed to obscenity and needed role models who were shown to take life seriously (who had ‘*levensernst*’) and to act according to the ‘ethical sense of plight’ (‘*zedelijk plichtsbesef*’) resonating in their conscience.

Describing those with the highest level of spiritual development as ‘aristocrats’ is completely in line with the ‘vernacular’ of modernists themselves.<sup>41</sup> As several examples may illustrate, the word ‘aristocrat’ had a positive connotation in modernist circles. When L.W.E. Rauwenhoff died in 1889, Lutheran minister M.J. Mees (1846-1894) wrote:

In his appearance, the organisation of his household, his studies and his taste, [Rauwenhoff] has shown to be, above all, a man of refinement and cultivation. He had an inborn dislike of all that is blunt, rough and ill mannered. He has been an aristocrat in the good sense of the word, who had an eye and a heart for the sublime and the beautiful in externals and, most of all, in principles of life.<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, Ph.R. Hugenholtz, who died in the same year, was commemorated in *De Hervorming* as “an aristocrat to the spirit [...], who has been fully aware of, and has wholeheartedly enjoyed, the spiritual riches he possessed.”<sup>43</sup> In 1897, S. Cramer characterised the deceased A.D. Loman as ‘a spiritual aristocrat’ as well.<sup>44</sup> The word ‘aristocrat’ was used in a positive way over a long period of time and by modernists of all kinds of persuasions. As late as 1916, the socialist modernist magazine *De Blijde Wereld* stated that a good minister should be “democratic at heart, aristocratic in spirit.”<sup>45</sup> The term ‘spiritual aristocrat’ was used by modernists and non-modernists

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<sup>39</sup> Yet, as demonstrated further on, there was discussion in modernist circles concerning the question of *how* alcoholism and prostitution could best be combatted.

<sup>40</sup> Examples are given in chapter 8.

<sup>41</sup> Zaalberg used the term as early as 1874. See: Zaalberg, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*, 6.

<sup>42</sup> “...dat hij vóór alles, in zijn optreden, de inrichting van zijn huis, in studie en smaak de man was van hooge en fijne beschaving. Van al wat plomp, ruw, ongemanierd was, had hij een ingeboren afkeer. Aristocraat was hij in dezen goeden zin des woords, dat hij overal in vormen, maar bovenal in levensrichting oog en hart had voor het verhevene en schoone.” Quoted from: M.J. Mees, ‘Binnenland – L.W.E. Rauwenhoff’, *De Hervorming* 1889-05 (2 February 1889), 18.

<sup>43</sup> “...aristocraat naar den geest [...], die zich ten volle bewust was en van harte genoot van den geestelijken schat, dien hij bezat.” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Na de uitvaart van dr. Ph.R. Hugenholtz’, *Ibid.* 1889-21 (25 May 1889), 82.

<sup>44</sup> S. Cramer, ‘A.D. Loman’, *Ibid.* 1897-17 (24 April 1897), 65-66, there 65.

<sup>45</sup> “...democraat van hart, aristocraat naar den geest.” Quoted from: ‘Redactioneel – “Een bezwaar tegen de kerk”’, *Ibid.* 1916-22 (27 May 1916), 184.

alike – it regularly appeared in (commemorative) articles dedicated to public figures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century<sup>46</sup> –, but only among the former did the adjective ‘spiritual’ explicitly refer to erudition, religiousness and morality as intertwined entities in the sense described above.

Part of first-generation modernists’ optimistic, teleological and individualistic world views was the belief that human society would become ever more perfect as time progressed. On the one hand, this was a matter of *perfection*: this process took place as a law of nature. On the other hand, it was a matter of *perfectibility*: the pace of this process could be increased. Because of their high level of development, ‘spiritual aristocrats’ had a crucial role to play in the endeavour to increase society’s evolution towards a perfect future state. They could help the spiritually less developed to become more pious, more learned and more virtuous.<sup>47</sup> Society tended to be seen not as a whole that is more than the sum of its parts, but rather as a collection of individuals. If these individuals were to be brought to a higher state of being, it was generally believed that social wrongs would be extinguished and that society in its entirety would thus be ameliorated.<sup>48</sup>

Being a ‘spiritual aristocrat’ did not have any socio-economic implications in principle, but, in practice, it turned out that those who were considered to be ‘spiritual aristocrats’ were all materially rather well off. Likewise, the spiritually ‘less’ developed were generally less materially fortunate as well. This was an inevitable consequence of modernist thinking. After all, in order to help the less developed, one should have enough time to devote himself to social work. Only those who were not preoccupied with a daily struggle to make ends meet had the opportunity to thoroughly devote themselves to spiritual matters and to let others share in their spiritual riches. With the ‘tutorage’ of ‘spiritual aristocrats’, it was believed that the spiritually less developed could attain a higher level of ‘civilisation’. Enabling and stimulating individuals to reflect upon religious and ethical affairs and to make conscious decisions regarding these matters would enhance the free development of religious life and the level of communal moral life.

In line with this, those who were spiritually ‘least’ developed and needed to be ‘tutored’ most were, in practice, materially less well off, or even destitute. Within the lowest socio-economic classes, the number of poorly educated people was highest, orthodoxy and religious indifference were rampant, and unethical behaviours, such as bad manners, intemperance and alcohol abuse, were believed to be more widespread than in other social classes. Because of the strong link existing in modernist thinking between religion and ethics, social wrongs as alcohol

<sup>46</sup> E.g.: ‘Kunst en letteren’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXVII.20417 (18 April 1894), 1; ‘Binnenland – P.L. Tak †’, *Ibid.* LXXX.25263 (25 August 1907), 1; [D.A.P.N. Koolen in:] ‘Tweede Kamer – In memoriam jhr.mr. A.F. de Savornin Lohman’, *Het Vaderland* (12 June 1924), evening paper A, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Exemplary in this respect is a series of articles consisting of citations from entrepreneur Jacob Duyvis’s (1832–1908) *Brieven over socialisme aan een werkman*, which *De Protestant* cited with approval. Duyvis believed that society would improve if the level of spiritual development increased. Intellectually and morally less developed individuals ‘profited’ from individuals who were intellectually and morally ‘superior’ to them. Moreover, he stated that what really mattered in society was not the distinction between socio-economic classes, but the difference in intellectual and moral development. See: ‘Brieven over socialisme’, *De Protestant* II.23 (7 June 1884), 2–3; II.24 (14 June 1884), 3. Yet, as explained below, a low level of spiritual development was linked to a low socio-economic position.

<sup>48</sup> Exemplary in this respect is what one of the editors of *De Protestant* wrote in 1886: he stated to believe that “the most important cause [of social wrongs] should be searched in individuals themselves” (“*de voornaamste oorzaak zoeken wij in de menschen zelven*”). Permeating society with “the religion of Jesus, the spirit of Christianity” (“*den godsdienst van Jezus, den geest van het Christendom*”) was hence the solution to social misery. Quoted from: ‘De socialisten’, *Ibid.* IV.30 (24 July 1886), 3–4.

abuse, prostitution and bad housekeeping, were seen as impediments to a free development of religious life, just as clericalism and dogmatism.<sup>49</sup> After all, social evils were products of self-indulgence, of giving prevalence to matter over mind, and prevented people from being autonomous, responsible, rational and disciplined individuals as well as from making a useful contribution to society at large. As they were blots on the escutcheon of a 'civilised' society, the higher classes were also responsible for exterminating them, primarily by giving the 'right' example to the lowest classes.<sup>50</sup>

As the stained-glass windows of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam exemplified, historical persons who had been shown to be 'spiritual aristocrats' could inspire and 'teach' generations to come – because of their achievements in life, but even more because of the principles on the basis of which they had arranged their lives. Living in a 'Protestant' spirit, expressed in a tolerant attitude, a commitment to the freedom of conscience, a high moral standing and a personal faith, was characteristic of 'spiritual aristocrats'. Here, the term 'Protestant' does not imply specific religious conceptions: many claiming to be Protestants, such as self-proclaimed defenders of sixteenth-century dogmas, lacked a Protestant spirit. In turn, others, never presenting themselves as such, had in fact been 'Protestants' in a spiritual sense. P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., to refer to an example already used in chapter 2, therefore claimed in all sincerity that Buddha, Socrates and Francis of Assisi had been just as 'Protestant' as Luther or Theodore Parker.<sup>51</sup> As liberal Protestantism was an offshoot of Christianity, its adherents looked at the name-giver of Christianity as 'tutor' *par excellence*. A clear indication thereof is the practice to call Jesus 'the Master' with a capital 'M'.<sup>52</sup> Although particularly first-generation modernists and their 'old-school' modernist descendants did this, modernists unanimously saw Jesus as their principal example. Whether they took him to be the son of a Galilean carpenter, a mythicized rabbi or the reflection of the eternal Christ, modernists of different persuasions shared with each other the desire to act in accordance with his spirit and to base their behaviour in church and society on what they saw as his principles. The nineteenth-century endeavour to write 'historically accurate' biographies of Jesus, usually referred to with the German term

<sup>49</sup> The following line of reasoning, which P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. put forward in 1896, could repeatedly be heard in modernist circles: because an individual could not devote all his energy to the development of his spiritual life as long as his body suffered from a disease, an addiction or indecent behaviour, the NPB, striving for the free development of religious life, should proactively try to cure bodies and souls wasting away in misery. Religious life could not flourish if someone was burdened with any physical 'illness' or mental 'instability' whatsoever. See: [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] *Verslag NPB 1896*, 22.

<sup>50</sup> E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] 'Met welke wapenen moet de levensmoeheid in onze dagen bestreden worden?', *De Hervorming* 1881-19 (14 May 1881), 74-75, there 74; I. Hooykaas, 'Het plan eener nieuwe vertaling van het Oude Testament', *Ibid.* 1884-43 (25 October 1884), 172; [H. Goeman Borgesius in:] 'Binnenland – De Drankwet en wat wij daarvoor nog kunnen doen', *Ibid.* 1885-13 (28 March 1885), 50; W. Zaalberg, 'Wat leest gij?', *Ibid.* 1886-49 (4 December 1886), 195-196, there 195; P. van der Meulen, 'Geheelonthouding', *Ibid.* 1892-17 (23 April 1892), 66-67; 'Binnenland – Eten en laten eten', *Ibid.* 1892-24 (11 June 1892), 94-95; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] 'De 21<sup>e</sup> Ned. Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1893-45 (11 November 1893), 177-178, there 178; E. Snellen, 'Bedwelming wijke!', *Ibid.* 1894-09 (3 March 1894), 33-34; 'Binnenland – Wij gaan vooruit', *Ibid.* 1894-43 (27 October 1894), 170-171; K. Vos, 'Ingezonden stukken – Repliek', *Ibid.* 1895-29 (20 July 1895), 116; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'Over onze inwendige zending', *Ibid.* 1897-11 (13 March 1897), 41-42; P. van der Meulen, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Een nieuwe veldtocht', *Ibid.* 1919-10 (8 March 1919), 38-39; C.S.K., 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Uit een achterbuurt', *Ibid.* 1923-06 (10 February 1923), 44-45, there 45.

<sup>51</sup> [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr.], 'Ons Allerheiligen', *Ibid.* 1898-45 (5 November 1898), 179-180.

<sup>52</sup> There are countless examples of this practice. A good, introductory summary of liberal Protestant research on the historical Jesus is given in: F. Dijkema, 'De Christus des geloofs en de Jezus der historie', *De Gids* LXXXVI (1922), 94-120.

‘*Leben-Jesu-Forschung*’ and popular in liberal Protestant circles, was partly a result thereof – not to be able to mimic Jesus’s concrete actions, but to distil his religious and ethical ideals out of the stories told about him in the Gospel.<sup>53</sup>

Contrary to the term ‘spiritual aristocrat’, the term ‘tutor’ or ‘tutorage’ was not part of the modernist vernacular. It is nonetheless, in combination with and as an addition to ‘spiritual aristocrat’, the best term to characterise the content of modernist discourse, as it has three connotations that directly relate to modernist thinking regarding the acceleration of the pace of progress. First, ‘tutors’ are exemplary persons. For the fulfilment of this role, ‘spiritual aristocrats’ were destined: they had a duty to be shining examples to the spiritually less developed in order to uplift these individuals. Second, the word ‘tutorage’ lays emphasis on learning: ‘spiritual aristocrats’ were ‘teachers’, from whom the spiritually less developed could learn in cognitive, religious and ethical respects. Third, a ‘tutor’ is someone who gives *personal* guidance. This element of one-on-one contact was fundamental to modernist thinking.

In practice, a ‘spiritual aristocrat’ could only be a bourgeois liberal Protestant. Modernists were convinced that they had the most reasonable, most plausible ideas about God – ideas that were not dictated by, but still compatible with, contemporary scientific and scholarly knowledge. Moreover, because they felt that they had the deepest understanding of what ‘piety’ truly was, and that they upheld high ethical principles, they believed that they had a vocation to assume a ‘tutoring’ role in church and society. The next two sections illustrate the consequences that this thinking, expressed in the discourse of ‘spiritual aristocrats’ and ‘tutoring’, had – both in the sphere of the church, by taking discussions on lay preaching as a case study, and in society, by focusing on the controversy over district nursing.

### 3. Liberal Protestant Discourse in the Context of the Church: The Case of Lay Preaching

As argued in previous chapters, notwithstanding dominant anti-ecclesial voices in the early modernist movement, no radically new forms that could replace church life have come into being.<sup>54</sup> Most liberal Protestants belonged to the Dutch Reformed Church and only a minority of them took the decision to join the Free Congregation, or the Remonstrant Brotherhood, or to be an NPB member without having church membership at the same time. *Volkskerk*-minded Reformed liberals felt that the Dutch Reformed Church should replace its old church order with one in which doctrinal freedom would be formally and unequivocally recognised, but the institution itself had too much value to be dismantled. To justify this reasoning, they used the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors. In a heterogeneous church denomination, modernists and orthodox could not completely isolate themselves – even if the bonds that kept them together were purely administrative, they still had to relate to each other in some way or another. Personal contact between modernists and orthodox would thus continue to be necessary. What is more, personal contact should be encouraged, as it was of vital importance for orthodoxy’s development

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<sup>53</sup> A classical account of the nineteenth-century *Leben-Jesu-Forschung* is given in: Schweitzer, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*. Nowadays, all attempts to write ‘historically accurate’ biographies of Jesus prior to the publication of Schweitzer’s book are seen as part of the first of three ‘quests’ for the historical Jesus. See: M. Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth. An Independent Historian’s Account of His Life and Teaching* (London and New York 2010), 1-59.

<sup>54</sup> According to H.U. Meyboom, modernist ‘laypeople’ would continue to feel the need to go to church as long as no new form of religious community was found. See: H.U. Meyboom, ‘Welke waarde heeft de theologische wetenschap voor het godsdienstig leven van onzen tijd?’, *De Hervorming* 1899-30 (29 July 1899), 125.

and hence for the advancement of a free development of religious life. To both of these ends, orthodox Protestants needed to be liberated from the dogmatic chains in which they were bound. Only in encounters with modernists, the ‘spiritual aristocrats’ in the realm of church and theology, were the orthodox confronted with ‘higher’ conceptions of God as well as with a ‘higher’ understanding of piety and morality – notions of which they would otherwise be deprived. Without such encounters, orthodox Protestants would never come to realise that their spiritual development was nipped in the bud by outdated beliefs and practices. In other words, for their own sake, they could not do without modernists’ ‘tutelage’.<sup>55</sup>

In the modernist movement, the church not only continued to be seen as the natural embodiment of communal religious life; as said, ecclesial vocabulary, symbols and rituals continued to be preferred to new forms. Experiments with religious services were limited to the abolishment of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and only (temporarily) in a small number of congregations. Next to (fruitless) calls for ceremonial or liturgical reforms, pleas for lay preaching could be heard in the modernist movement as well. Yet, just as ceremonial reforms, laymen-led religious services in church congregations and even in NPB branches never truly got off the ground. The discursive practice of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors was responsible for this.

In early 1878, in an article in which he gave account of his objectives as editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming*, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. stated to hope that “among us, it will be out of the question to speak of ‘clergymen’ [as opposed to] ‘laypeople’.”<sup>56</sup> Eighteen years later, J. Herderscheê believed that this hope had indeed come true; resolutely, he stated to perceive that modernists “reject [...] the distinction between clergymen and laypeople.”<sup>57</sup> Although it might seem that Herderscheê had some reason to assume this, as laypeople were stimulated to be involved in theological and church-related discussions, his perception was in fact a *misperception*. There continued to be a differentiation within the modernist movement between ‘clergymen’, having completed an academic theological study and being ordained as ministers, and ‘laypeople’.

As early as 1873, Dutch Reformed minister C. Cammenga (1826-1889), writing under the pseudonym ‘Agathophilus’ (‘he who loves intrinsic goodness’), addressed the issue of lay preaching.<sup>58</sup> He was urged to do so by an article in *De Standaard*, in which Abraham Kuyper, as Cammenga paraphrased, had recommended lay preaching as a remedy for the factional struggle in the Dutch Reformed Church. Granting laymen the right to lead religious services could give factional minorities in local congregations the opportunity to organise their own services, without being confronted with a shortage of ordained, theologically trained ministers.<sup>59</sup> Before giving his own opinion on the matter, Cammenga gave a brief overview of the practice of lay preaching in the history of Christianity. In the church of Corinth in Pauline times, lay

<sup>55</sup> As stated in reference to the ideal of the *volkskerk* in chapter 4.

<sup>56</sup> “...dat er bij ons van geen geestelijken en leeken meer sprake mag zijn...” Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Iets over ons blad en de behoeften waaraan het te voldoen heeft’, *De Hervorming* 1878-02 (12 January 1878), 1. See also: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘De Hervormingsdag’, *Ibid.* 1878-43 (26 October 1878), 1-2, there 1.

<sup>57</sup> “...verwerpen [...] de onderscheiding tusschen geestelijken en leeken...” Quoted from: J. Herderscheê, ‘Verborgen en openbaar’, *Ibid.* 1896-29 (18 July 1896), 113.

<sup>58</sup> A. de Kempenaer, *Vermomde Nederlandsche en Vlaamsche schrijvers. Vervolg op Mr. J.I. Doorninck’s vermomde en naamlooze schrijvers* (Amsterdam [1928] 1970), 12. In this publication, his name is spelled as ‘Camminga’.

<sup>59</sup> Agathophilus [C. Cammenga], ‘Leeken-preek’, *De Hervorming* 1873-35 (28 August 1873), 2-3, there 2. In the first years after the *Doleantie*, lay preaching did occasionally happen in the church community grouped around Kuyper due to a shortage of ordained, theologically trained ministers. See: Reitsma, *Geschiedenis van de Hervorming en de Hervormde Kerk der Nederlanden*, 431.



preaching had been the rule. In the early church in general, laymen – laywomen were supposed to be silent – had had all the freedom to take the church floor and to more or less spontaneously sermonise whenever they felt sudden inspiration to do so. Among sixteenth-century Anabaptists, whose ‘spiritual enthusiasm’ measured up to that of the earliest Christians, lay preaching had also been the rule. Yet other Protestants, such as Lutherans and Calvinists, had recoiled from it. In spite of the Protestant principle of the ‘priesthood of all believers’, the distinction between clergymen and laypeople continued to exist after the Reformation.<sup>60</sup> Even in their clothing, the former remained distinguished from the latter – because, in Cammenga’s words, “people wanted this, the faithful did not want to see their preachers wearing ‘a merchant’s costume’.” Particularly in the Dutch Reformed Church, “numerous ecclesial regulations have secured the pulpit with lock and key against irregular usurpation.”<sup>61</sup>

Cammenga himself was not unfavourably disposed towards lay preaching. It could make an end to vacant pulpits at once and could facilitate factional minorities to arrange their own services within the existing framework of the Dutch Reformed Church. He did not see why a layman’s sermon would be less edifying than a sermon written by a minister, solely because the former lacked the latter’s training and ordination. Nevertheless, Cammenga felt that lay preaching could only be a *temporal* measure. Church councils should have the right to create and to abolish lay-led services at any time to avert disorder. Even more important, lay-led services should not be looked at as an ideal, “because whichever church should appreciate able and scholarly as well as permanently appointed pastors, who can completely devote themselves to fill the spiritual needs of [their] congregation.”<sup>62</sup>

Reactions to his article were mixed. Former minister W. Zaalberg reminded Cammenga of the fact that a group of church councils in the north-eastern part of Friesland had already made a formal plea for the legalisation of lay preaching at the Dutch Reformed synod several years before. Zaalberg referred to the synod of 1868, during which, in his cynical account, “the Very Reverend Gentlemen of the Synod could hardly preserve their official dignity, when the request [for lay preaching, TK] came up for consideration and was rapidly stowed away in the sepulchre of other ecclesial absurdities.”<sup>63</sup> The request had been rejected, as it was believed that lay preaching was inconsistent with the history of the Dutch Reformed Church – never had laymen been allowed to lead religious services –, that it would inevitably lead to turmoil and confusion, and that it did not contribute to “true congregational development and edification.” Moreover, the commission feared that lay preaching would further undermine the significance of the academic training of ministers-to-be, which was already endangered, as the government was thinking about removing theological faculties from state universities.<sup>64</sup> However, the petitioners

<sup>60</sup> The ‘priesthood of all believers’ means that those who lead religious services do not have exclusive access to the realm of God.

<sup>61</sup> “...het volk wilde dat, de vromen wilden geen “koopmanskleed” aan den leeraar zien.”; “...tal van kerkelijke bepalingen heeft den preekstoel tegen onregelmatige overweldiging wel met slot en grendel verzekerd.” Quoted from: Agathophilus [C. Cammenga], ‘Leeken-preek’, *De Hervorming* 1873-35 (28 August 1873), 2-3, there 2.

<sup>62</sup> “...elke kerk, welke ook, prijs moet stellen op kundige en wetenschappelijke, maar ook op vaste voorgangers, die er met hun geheele leven voor staan, om in al de geestelijke behoeften der gemeente te voorzien.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>63</sup> “...de Hoogerwaardige Heeren der Synode ter nauwernood hunne officieele deftigheid bewaren konden, toen het verzoek ter tafel kwam en ras werd bijgezet in het graf van andre [sic] kerkelijke dolzinnigheden.” Quoted from: W. Zaalberg, “‘t Kan verkeeren!”, *Ibid.* 1873-36 (4 September 1873), 3.

<sup>64</sup> “...ware ontwikkeling en opbouw der gemeente.” Quoted from: *Handelingen NHK 1868*, 72-74.

from Friesland felt that there were several good reasons to introduce lay preaching. It would clear the Dutch Reformed Church once and for all from the ‘Roman Catholic leaven’ that the Reformation had not entirely erased, that it would take some work of ordained ministers’ shoulders, and that it would increase the involvement of the flock with church life.<sup>65</sup> It could appease factional quarrels and would not lead to more turbulence if it were strictly regulated. According to Zaalberg, Cammenga simply reiterated those arguments and did not bring up any new one. Yet, by reintroducing the issue of lay preaching into public debate, Cammenga and Kuyper showed that this issue was still up for consideration in both orthodox and modernist circles. Zaalberg hoped that this would urge the synod to consider the matter once again, as the arguments in favour of lay preaching were, in his opinion, still valid.<sup>66</sup>

Dutch Reformed minister A.C.J. van der Kemp (1838-1899) took a more reserved position than Zaalberg. The shortage of ministers primarily affected congregations in rural areas. Van der Kemp was not very impressed by many countrymen’s level of civilisation and was convinced that these “would generally prefer uncivilised men as preachers.” Services in Secessionist congregations, during which farmers read centuries-old, ultra-dogmatic fire-and-brimstone sermons, he contended, evinced the veracity of this conviction. If the Dutch Reformed Church adopted Secessionist practices, he asked rhetorically, “would the civilised segment of the congregation not become more aloof from the church than it already is, and is it not exactly our vocation to infuse this segment of the congregation with love and sympathy for the church as much as we can?” Van der Kemp thus feared that lay preaching would bring men with a lack of refinement to the pulpit. Yet, he did not denounce Cammenga’s plea altogether. Men “who have acquired an academic degree,” albeit not a degree in theology, and who hence evidently possessed high intellectual capacities, should be granted access to the pulpit – not so much to solve the problem of vacant pulpits, but rather to give a boost to religious life: “learned members of the congregation, men with a clear mind and a heart for religion, [...] can make those who have become estranged from religion see that religion is not a ‘police measure’ [the only value of which is to secure civil order, TK], but an indelible need of true mankind.” As preachers, such learned men would be good examples to the entire congregation.<sup>67</sup>

Cammenga’s plea did not have any immediate consequences, but the discussion on lay preaching would nonetheless flare up several times after 1873. Particularly in the mid-1880s and mid-1890s, it was brought up in NPB circles. F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., for example, noticed in 1885 that until then, the need for lay preachers had not really been felt in the modernist movement. After all, modern theologians were ‘laymen’ themselves, as they were no longer “official interpreters of divine prophecy.” Yet, as soon as necessity compelled it, non-theologians should be welcomed to the pulpit. That is to say, “peasant preaching will not be met with appreciation in

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 72-73. See also: *Verhandeling van ring Bergum over “opwekkingen van het godsdienstig gemeentelven door middel van leekenprediking”*, NL-HtBHC, Familie Van Heusden, 325, inv.nr. 128.

<sup>66</sup> W. Zaalberg, “‘t Kan verkeeren!”, *De Hervorming* 1873-36 (4 September 1873), 3.

<sup>67</sup> “...dat deze, in den regel, als predikers zouden verkiezen, mannen zonder eenige beschaving.”; “Zou door zulk een leekenprediking het beschaafde deel der gemeente nog niet meer van de kerk verwijderd worden en is het niet juist onze roeping om, zooveel in ons is, ook bij dat deel der gemeente liefde en sympathie voor de kerk in te boezemen?”; “...die een academischen graad verworven hadden...”; “...geletterde gemeenteleden, mannen met een helder hoofd en een warm hart voor de zaak van den godsdienst [...] [zouden] menig van den godsdienst vervreemd hart [...] doen inzien, dat de godsdienst niet is een ‘politie maatregel’ maar een onuitwischbare behoefte aan den echten mensch.” Quoted from: A.C.J. van der Kemp, ‘Leekenpreek’, *Ibid.* 1873-37 (11 September 1873), 2.

our circles. But apart from that, there is nothing from which a cultured man should be deterred to serve among us as a preacher.”<sup>68</sup> Twelve years later, to take another example, someone who signed as ‘a democrat, also in the field of religion’ sharply criticised the NPB branch in Schiedam for vainly asking fourteen different ministers to give a sermon without thinking about the possibility of lay preaching. “When shall we have reached the point,” he sighed while applying his criticism to the NPB as a whole, “that not only fourteen different ministers will be approached to lead a religious service, but also, at least in a specific situation, a sincerely religious individual who is not a minister.”<sup>69</sup>

In the 1920s, lay preaching was an important item on the modernist agenda. In 1921, G.A. de Ridder (1890-1970), at that time one of the leading Reformed liberals in Amsterdam, argued that laymen could assist ministers in preaching once in a while.<sup>70</sup> Three years later, he explained that lay preaching could give Reformed liberals in urban areas the opportunity to hold church services of their own more often. Simultaneously, however, De Ridder implied that lay preaching should only be tried in exceptional circumstances, as he feared that it would be accompanied by mimicry, dilettantism and vanity. If a layman wanted to preach during a religious service, he should avoid imitating ministerial mannerisms, not enter “a field that is not his, for example theology as exegesis and dogmatics,” and have the ability to give clear, well-considered and eloquent verbal expression to his innermost religious feelings. A layman should understand that greater demands were made upon a sermon than upon a lecture. In his own words, De Ridder could not hide his doubts as to whether a layman could meet these demands.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time, lay preaching was hotly debated among Remonstrants. In 1861, the general assembly of the Remonstrant Brotherhood had adopted a new church order in which access to the pulpit was laid down as the exclusive prerogative of academically trained theologians. According to minister N. Blokker (1885-1975), who gave an historical overview of the Remonstrant discussion on lay preaching in a 1929 article, this was done in response to a minority that wanted to open Remonstrant pulpits for theological students who had not yet fully completed their studies. In 1900, the general assembly had reconfirmed its exclusion of non-theologians from Remonstrant pulpits by stating that teachers of religion did not have the right to lead church services.<sup>72</sup> Now, for the first time in 1920 and again in 1929, minister P.

<sup>68</sup> “...geen officieele uitleggers meer van ’t heilig orakel...”; “Eene turfboeren-prediking zal in onze kringen niet licht waardeering vinden. Maar overigens is er niets, wat een beschaafd godsdienstig man zou behoeven afte schrikken om onder ons als prediker op te treden.” Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Vraagbus’, *Ibid.* 1885-07 (14 February 1885), 28. See also: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenvbond’, *Ibid.* 1884-46 (15 November 1884), 183-185, there 183.

<sup>69</sup> “Wanneer zullen we eens zoover zijn gekomen, dat men behalve vruchteloos bij 14 predikanten aan te kloppen, ook eens in een bijzonder geval althans, een ernstig godsdienstig mensch, hoewel geen predikant, vraagt om in eene godsdienstige bijeenkomst voor te gaan.” Quoted from: Een democraat ook op godsdienstig gebied, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1897-48 (27 November 1897), 191. See also: ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Uit Schiedam’, *Ibid.* 1897-46 (13 November 1897), 183.

<sup>70</sup> [G.A. de Ridder in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Kansel-amateurs’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVIII.269 (26 September 1921), morning paper A, 3.

<sup>71</sup> “...een terrein, dat het zijne niet is, bijv. theologie als tekst uitlegging, dogmatiek...” Quoted from: [G.A. de Ridder in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Leekepreken?’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCVII.31418 (25 August 1924), evening paper, 9. See also: [G.A. de Ridder in:] J.J. Meyer, ‘Kerknieuws – Leekepreken’, *Het Vaderland* (4 September 1924), morning paper, 4.

<sup>72</sup> [N. Blokker in:] ‘Kerknieuws – De Remonstrantsche kansel’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXVI.134 (15 May 1929), morning paper C, 2.

Eldering advocated the establishment of a 'lay order of worship' as the consequent implementation of the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers. If laypeople could say an edifying word on non-church meetings with a religious character, he wondered, why should they be excluded from the pulpit?<sup>73</sup>

Eldering's amazement about the persistent distinction in modernist circles between ministers or theologians on the one hand, and laypeople on the other, seemed to be understandable. After all, reforming organised religious life, including congregational practices of worship, was what the modernist movement claimed to strive for. Moreover, he was not alone in his amazement. In 1913, H.G. Cannegieter Dzn. accused the modernist movement of being unfaithful to its own agenda of ecclesial reform: "this enduring distance between theologian and layperson [is] a rather peculiar phenomenon in the modern era."<sup>74</sup> More than a decade later, S.H.N. Gorter echoed Cannegieter by deploring: "it is a deeply sad sign that a religious service cannot be thought of without a minister in our circles."<sup>75</sup> Yet the persistence with which the distinction between ministers and laypeople was preserved was not as astonishing as it seemed. An analysis of the arguments against lay preaching, arguments with which the grand majority of modernists apparently agreed, demonstrates that it was a straightforward consequence of modernist thinking.

What is striking in Van der Kemp's already-mentioned response to Cammenga's 1873 article is that he would not like to see men with a low standard of culture and outmoded ideas about God on the pulpit, indicated by his dislike of Secessionist 'peasant preaching', and that he emphasized that a preacher should have an academic degree and "a clear mind and a heart for religion." In other words, only intelligent, pious and cultivated men – opening the office of minister to women was not yet considered – were eligible to climb the pulpit. Because of these characteristics, a preacher was fit to be an example to many. In all arguments opposing or severely restricting lay preaching, this emphasis on the supposedly higher spiritual development of ministers was the *Leitmotiv*. Ideally, a preacher should be a 'prophet', a spiritual guide who could express what was going on in his inner life and give this a more general significance in such a way that he inspired others and contributed to the cognitive, devotional and ethical development of those others. A preacher's words and actions should foster character building among his congregation. In order to be a 'prophet', one thus had to be able to set the standard. Again and again, it was implied that a completed theological training guaranteed that someone had the capacities necessary to lead a congregation.

During a discussion at the meeting of modernist ministers in the northern provinces of 1879, for instance, the remark was made that although no modernist would deny being anticlerical, modernist laypeople were still more inclined to accept words spoken by a minister than by fellow laymen. A minister was apparently seen as authoritative because of the office he exercised. Furthermore, because of his profession, for which homiletic skills were required, a minister

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<sup>73</sup> [P. Eldering in:] 'Kerknieuws – Algemeene vergadering der Remonstrantsche Broederschap', *Ibid.* LXXXVI.152 (3 June 1929), evening paper D, 2.

<sup>74</sup> "Voor den modernen tijd een vreemd verschijnsel toch eigenlijk, die blijvende afstand tusschen theoloog en leek!" Quoted from: H.G. Cannegieter, 'De noodzakelijkheid van zelfkritiek voor het bestaan der kerkgenootschappen', *De Hervorming* 1913-48 (29 November 1913), 382-383, there 383.

<sup>75</sup> "Het is een diep droevig teeken, dat men zich in onze kringen geen godsdienstoefening kan denken zonder predikant." Quoted in: [S.H.N. Gorter in:] 'Kerknieuws – De Remonstrantsche kansel', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXVI.134 (15 May 1929), morning paper C, 2.

could usually speak better in public than could laypeople.<sup>76</sup> In 1895, H. Oort stated that cultured laymen should be allowed to deliver sermons, but only sermons *written by theologians*. He thereby indicated that in order to say something sensible about the Unseen – and to put this in such a way that others could make sense of it –, a theological study was needed.<sup>77</sup> Two years later, J. van Loenen Martinet implied agreement with Oort by writing that “in general, we give preference to graduates, also regarding the leadership of religious services.”<sup>78</sup> Because biblical times were different from the present day, B.D. Eerdmans consecutively argued in 1913, “it is very difficult for a layperson to understand the edifying and religious [truths contained] in [the Bible] without any explanation.”<sup>79</sup> Laypeople could simply not do without theologians’ guidance. In M.C. van Mourik Broekman’s perception, laypeople themselves tended to concur with Eerdmans’s conviction. In early 1918, he noticed that in laypeople’s eyes, “theology seems to be a peculiar discipline, accessible for insiders only.”<sup>80</sup>

In the years after the First World War, when the debate on lay preaching intensified, the supposedly higher spiritual development of ministers continued to be the dominant argument with which laypeople were denied (full) access to the pulpit. De Ridder, for example, used the argument to enforce his view that lay preachers should only be called to the pulpit in exceptional cases and only in a supporting role next to the minister.<sup>81</sup> The belief that the status of minister was a safeguard for homiletic quality was stronger in modernist circles than the need for lay preachers.<sup>82</sup> It was hard to miss, as a journalist in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* commented in 1921, how ineradicable “the idea [among modernists] is that giving a religious speech should remain the task of a professional.” This journalist recognised that modernists automatically assumed that a layman was spiritually less developed than a minister. Moreover, he thought that the lack of grand support for lay preaching in the modernist movement also had to do with a latent awe for the office of minister. Even if a lay preacher were to be introduced as a ‘minister’,

<sup>76</sup> [H. Koekebakker in:] ‘Binnenland – Herder en leraar’, *De Hervorming* 1879-28 (12 July 1879), 116.

<sup>77</sup> H. Oort, ‘Preek-lezen’, *Ibid.* 1895-18 (4 May 1895), 70.

<sup>78</sup> “In ’t algemeen geven wij ook bij de leiding van godsdienstoefeningen aan gestudeerden de voorkeur.” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1897-48 (27 November 1897), 191.

<sup>79</sup> “Het is [...] voor den leek zeer bezwaarlijk het stichtelijke en godsdienstige daarin te verstaan zonder eenige toelichting hoegenaamd.” Quoted from: B.D. Eerdmans, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De Protestantenbond-Bijbel’, *Ibid.* 1913-03 (18 January 1913), 23.

<sup>80</sup> “Theologie lijkt hen een wonderlijke wetenschap, toegankelijk alleen voor ingewijden.” Quoted from: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Theologie’, *Ibid.* 1918-04 (26 January 1918), 13-14, there 13. Van Mourik Broekman actually used the word “*aristocraat*” (“aristocrat”) when describing what a good preacher should be. In his opinion, “the best should rule. The spiritual noble should lead his fellow men.” (“*De beste heersche. De edele van geest leide zijn medemenschen.*”) See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Dominus’, *Ibid.* 1916-29 (15 July 1916), 242-243, there 242. In a 1925 article in *De Stroom*, he explicitly linked spiritual development to socio-economic class. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Maatschappelijk leven – De dominé en de standen’, *De Stroom* IV.14 (14 March 1925), 2. A decade later, Van Mourik Broekman argued that lay preaching was not something to strive for, as ministers were ‘spiritual aristocrats’ by profession and hence most fit to lead a congregation. In his eyes, being an ordained minister guaranteed that someone had the character, expertise and skills to edify others. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, *Het geestelijk leiderschap van den predikant* (Lochem [1936]), esp. 14-16.

<sup>81</sup> [G.A. de Ridder in:] ‘Kerknieuws – Kansel-amateurs’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXVIII.269 (28 September 1921), morning paper A, 3.

<sup>82</sup> This argument was also put forward in the discussion on lay preaching during the 1929 general meeting of the Remonstrant Brotherhood. See: ‘Kerknieuws – De Remonstrantsche kansel’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXVI.134 (15 May 1929), morning paper C, 2.

without an ordination he would never be as authoritative as an actual incumbent.<sup>83</sup> In a 1924 commentary, J.J. Meyer sharply put forward the majority modernist opinion on lay preaching by reiterating Van der Kemp's disqualification of ultra-orthodox practices of worship: "the lower the spiritual development of a congregation is, the higher the desire to be led by a lay preacher will be."<sup>84</sup> That same year, Dutch Reformed minister F.E. van Santen (1876-1966) also reasoned that a minister was more capable of preaching than a layman, albeit not exclusively for the latter's lack of theological training. A minister was attached to a congregation and therefore personally knew the people to whom he was preaching, which Van Santen deemed necessary to bring out the Gospel truths as understandably as possible. Moreover, by being a minister, someone showed that he felt the need to bring people closer to God, a need without which a sermon could not truly be a testimony of faith. In his assumption that a minister was spiritually more developed than a layman, Van Santen thus emphasised the aspect of piety enclosed in the word 'spiritual'.<sup>85</sup>

Related to the issue of whether laypeople should continue to be excluded from the pulpit or not was the discussion surrounding the admittance of laypeople to meetings of modern theologians. In this case also, the distinction between those with and without theological training was maintained because of the latter's supposedly higher spiritual development. After several pleas to welcome laypeople at the annual meeting of modern theologians in Amsterdam, an experiment with lay presence was held in 1871. That year and the following year, the meeting's board invited several laymen as lecturers, and accepted two laymen in its midst. As early as 1873, however, the role of laymen was reduced to that of listeners. A year later, the experiment came to a permanent end. As A. Kuenen explained in a historical overview of the meeting's first twenty-five years, wiping away the distinction between theologians and non-theologians had not been satisfactory. Reflecting upon and contributing to theological discussions with enough expertise was deemed too difficult for laypeople. Kuenen admitted that it could be advantageous once in a while to hear what laypeople had to say about theological issues, "but it will not do, in order to profit from this advantage every now and then, to throw our workplace open to them and to tempt them to enter it."<sup>86</sup> Other meetings of modernist theologians and ministers, such as the one organised in the three northernmost provinces of the Netherlands, did not have an unrestricted admittance policy either. The general feeling in this matter among modernists was articulated in 1893 by P. van der Meulen (1866-1958), a liberal Reformed tax inspector who would gain fame as an ardent, socialist-oriented advocate of teetotalism: it is not proper, he argued, for a layman to interfere in a theological discussion.<sup>87</sup> In spite of the modernist self-image as a totally egalitarian community, the difference between theologians and laypeople, deemed outmoded particularly in the early modernist movement, was securely maintained.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>83</sup> "...het denkbeeld is, dat het uitspreken van een religieuze rede toch beroepswerk blijft..." Quoted from: 'Kerknieuws – Kansel-amateurs', *Ibid.* LXXVIII.269 (28 September 1921), morning paper A, 3.

<sup>84</sup> "Hoe lager de kring in geestelijke ontwikkeling staat, des te liever bedient men zich van den oefenaar." Quoted from: J.J. Meyer, 'Kerknieuws – Leekepreken', *Het Vaderland* (4 September 1924), morning paper, 4.

<sup>85</sup> F.E. van Santen, 'Hoofdartikel – Leekepreken', *De Hervorming* 1924-45 (8 November 1924), 353-355.

<sup>86</sup> "Doch het gaat niet aan, ten einde nu en dan dat voordeel te genieten, onze werkplaats voor hen open te stellen en hen daarbinnen te lokken." Quoted from: Kuenen, *Gedachtenisrede*, 18.

<sup>87</sup> P. van der Meulen, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1893-26 (1 July 1893), 103.

<sup>88</sup> In the discussion on the (in)compatibility of liberal Protestantism and the little religions, the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors could also be heard. With modernists who incorporated Spiritist or Theosophical

Of course, orthodox Protestants would certainly not deny that a minister should be bright, devout and well-mannered. However, modernists undoubtedly had more qualms about lay preaching than orthodox had. In the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, for example, lay preaching was authorised, albeit severely restricted. Preachers were expected to have studied at either the Theological Seminary in Kampen or the theological faculty of the Free University in Amsterdam, but in exceptional cases, regional church councils could give a layman, who was then called a *'lerend ouderling'* or *'oefenaar'*, the right to conduct Sunday services in a particular congregation for a fixed period of time.<sup>89</sup> Moreover, the eighth article of the church order of the Reformed Churches allowed a layman to become an ordained minister without academic theological training if he were shown to possess *'singuliere gaven'* ('exceptional, God-given talents').<sup>90</sup> The existence of such a 'back entrance' to the pulpit had to do with the fact that in the Reformed Churches ministers were not preferred over lay preachers because of their level of education as such, but rather because of their ordination. In neo-Calvinist thinking, a congregation could only be led by a man who had been ordained as a minister by ordained ministers.<sup>91</sup> With some imagination, this could be seen as the Calvinist variant of the Roman Catholic apostolic succession. Theological training was also important, but mainly in order to ensure that a future minister had a profound knowledge of the church dogmas, to prevent him from leading his congregation away from divine Truth.<sup>92</sup> In some Secessionist circles, after 1907 primarily concentrated within the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (Reformed Congregations), lay preaching was looked upon with even less reticence – more than that, it was the rule. There, ministers-to-be were instructed by ministers who had not been academically trained themselves either. The adage was that a preacher should have gained his knowledge directly from God (*'van God geleerd'*) – meaning that God should have personally revealed the biblical truths to this man's inner self, which could be 'examined' by those who already felt certain about their election –, rather than through an academic theological study (*'godgeleerd'*).<sup>93</sup>

The point here is that in modernist circles, in spite of the ubiquitous rhetoric of reform, the general reluctance to give laypeople access to the pulpit was a hindrance to an internal reorganisation of church life: religious services continued to be structured along 'traditional'

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elements in their liberal Protestant persuasion, the notion of the 'spiritual aristocracy' got an esoteric dimension: in their eyes, 'spiritual aristocrats' were those who had been initiated into a divine secret or had been endowed with knowledge that was hidden to others, and only these 'clairvoyants' were therefore in a position to tutor others in raising their level of spiritual development. To allude to the stained-glass gallery of spiritual 'tutors' in the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, these modernists would also have liked to see Theosophists Annie Besant (1847-1933) and Helena Blavatsky (1831-1891), and Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science, added to this gallery. The majority of modernists, however, considered the supernaturalist, parapsychological and dogmatic nature of these faiths to be inferior to, and therefore incompatible with, the 'spiritually aristocratic' character of liberal Protestantism.

<sup>89</sup> H. Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht* (Kampen 1928), 364-465; H. Florijn, 'De verdwenen oefenaar', *Oude Paden* XI.4 (December 2006), 30-35, there 34-35. That the terms *'oefenaar'* and *'lerend ouderling'* were both used in the Reformed Churches is exemplified in: 'Kerknieuws', *De Reformatie* III.37 (15 June 1923), 295-296, there 296.

<sup>90</sup> Bouwman, *Gereformeerd kerkrecht*, 434-439.

<sup>91</sup> [F. W. Grosheide in:] 'Uit het kerkelijk leven – Gebrek aan predikanten', *De Waarheidsvriend* XII.40 (2 September 1921), 2; 'Kerknieuws – Kansel-amateurs', *Ibid.* LXXVIII.269 (28 September 1921), morning paper A, 3.

<sup>92</sup> A layman who wished to become a minister because of *singuliere gaven* therefore had to pass, just as theology students, a dogmatic exam by the council of the region where he went to church, and, after being called to a congregation, the regional council to which this last congregation belonged.

<sup>93</sup> Van Eijnatten and Van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis*, 225.

role patterns, with the congregation being an audience of listeners.<sup>94</sup> Becoming and being a minister was not a matter of vocation in the sense that someone was ‘elected’ by God to preach his Word, as it was in orthodoxy, but a matter of spiritual development – it required being highly-educated, being strongly aware of and thankful for divine presence in this world, and being cultured. Being a (modernist) minister in itself proved that someone possessed all three elements of high spiritual development – knowledge, free piety and ethics –, whereas being a layman did not guarantee that. For leading a religious service, however, there had to be certainty about the possession of these elements, otherwise a service could not serve its purpose.

By virtue of their profession, ministers were thus seen as ‘spiritual aristocrats’ and the obvious persons to be leading in the sphere of worship.<sup>95</sup> As in modernist circles religion was believed to be at the root of *every* significant contemporary issue, their guidance extended to other spheres as well. *De Hervorming* may serve as a perfect illustration thereof: although it specifically claimed to be a ‘general’ opinion magazine, the bulk of its articles, including those on social affairs, were written by theologians and ministers.<sup>96</sup>

#### 4. Liberal Protestant Discourse in the Context of Society: The Case of District Nursing

In modernist circles, worship was meant to jointly experience and express metaphysical emotions, and to contribute to character building; religious services and religious education should ideally help people to develop plausible conceptions of God, to realise the ideal of ‘free piety’, and to lead morally virtuous lives. The goal of social work, aimed at relieving the poor and needy, should be character building as well. Those who lacked self-discipline or a stable environment should be helped in such a way that they would become independent beings – that is, individuals who were no ‘slaves’ of dogmas, the bottle, carnal desires and bad habits or no longer run the risk of becoming such ‘slaves’, and who were no longer hindered in their process of spiritual self-realisation. As said before, alcohol abuse and prostitution, for example, were seen as severe impediments to this process. The characters of orphans and neglected children, to give another example, needed to be strengthened with the help of high-minded persons, to prevent them from ending up in the gutter. There was no consensus in the modernist movement *how* the autonomy of the individual could best be strengthened among people in need. In the case of alcohol consumption, some modernists propagated moderation, while others pleaded for the prohibition of ardent spirits, and yet others went as far as to advocate teetotalism, sometimes as part of a politically socialist persuasion or a lifestyle that also included vegetarianism.<sup>97</sup> In the case of

<sup>94</sup> As argued in chapter 4, even the Free Congregation in Amsterdam continued to have a fixed ‘pastor’. Moreover, as shown in this same chapter, it was not unaffected by the ‘ecclesial turn’.

<sup>95</sup> As Noordhoff concludes, ‘leadership’ in modernist circles was legitimised on the basis of aptitude (*begaafdheid*) and achievements (*prestaties*). See: Noordhoff, *Het godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven*, 45. The relationship between ministers and ‘laypeople’ in modernist circles was hence not as egalitarian as Bos believes; a distinction between the two continued to exist. Cf.: Bos, *In dienst van het Koninkrijk*, 327.

<sup>96</sup> See also: Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 54-57. Hoenderdaal also notices that liberal Protestant church and organisational life were dominated by ‘strong personalities’, who were all without exception ministers. He states that liberal Protestantism as such totally relied on ministers. See: Hoenderdaal, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen’, 174-175, 289; Douwes, ‘Eerder gids dan aanvoerder’, 47-48.

<sup>97</sup> E.g.: H.K., Jr., ‘Billijk?’, *De Hervorming* 1880-28 (10 July 1880), 110; E.J.W. Koch, ‘De strijd tegen den drank-duivel’, *Ibid.* 1886-49 (4 December 1886), 196-197; E. Snellen, ‘Wees een zegen’, *Ibid.* 1888-46 (17 November 1888), 181-182; E.J.W. Koch, ‘Beslist optreden’, *Ibid.* 1889-20 (18 May 1889), 78; I. Hooykaas, Jr., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Geheelonthouding’, *Ibid.* 1892-12 (19 March 1892), 48; P. van der Meulen, ‘Geheelonthouding’, *Ibid.* 1892-16 (16 April 1892), 61-62; 1892-17 (23 April 1892), 66-67; I. Hooykaas, Jr., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Geheel-



prostitution, some argued from a medical perspective that the best way to combat prostitution was a strong regulation. Others, having a legalistic point of view, felt that regulation was not powerful enough to condemn the intrinsic evil of prostitution, and asserted that it should be made a criminal act, even if this meant that prostitution went completely underground, with all the potential health risks and exploitation that that involved.<sup>98</sup> Regarding the nursing of children who for any reason whatsoever could not live with their parents, there was lively debate among modernists as to whether a foster home or a nursing home was the best environment for these children to be raised in. The discussion became heated to such an extent that the modernist *Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen* (Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women), which had been founded in 1887 and aimed to find foster homes for children in need, was flanked by the *Vereeniging voor vrijzinnige tehuizen* (Association for Liberal Protestant Nursing Homes) as of 1911, which was based on the conviction that orphans, ill-treated children and youthful miscreants were better off in nursing homes.<sup>99</sup> However, notwithstanding all differences of

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onthouding', *Ibid.* 1892-18 (30 April 1892), 71-72; E. Snellen, 'Een misslag, die hersteld moet worden', *Ibid.* 1892-23 (4 June 1892), 90-91; 1892-24 (11 June 1892), 93-94; P. van der Meulen, 'Ingezonden stukken – Geheelonthouding', *Ibid.* 1892-27 (2 July 1892), 108; 1892-28 (9 July 1892), 111-112; E. Snellen, 'Nog iets over de hooge beteekenis der persoonlijkheid in de levensopvatting van den predikant', *Ibid.* 1893-17 (29 April 1893), 65-66; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Het congres tegen drankmisbruik', *Ibid.* 1893-34 (26 August 1893), 134-135; E. Snellen, 'Bedwelming wijke!', *Ibid.* 1894-09 (3 March 1894), 33-34; J.F. Metzelaar, 'Ingezonden stukken – Wisselwerking', *Ibid.* 1894-11 (17 March 1894), 43-44; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Ingezonden stukken – Moeten zeloten noodzakelijk onrechtvaardig zijn?', *Ibid.* 1895-28 (13 July 1895), 112; P. van der Meulen, 'Ingezonden stukken – Een tegenstelling?', *Ibid.* 1895-50 (14 December 1895), 199-200; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Overdreven', *Ibid.* 1896-47 (21 November 1896), 185; A. de Koe, *Het beginsel der onthouding* (s.l. 1896); P. van der Meulen, *Bier als volksdrank* (s.l. 1896); B. Tideman Jz., 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1899-53 (1 April 1899), 51; Pl. van den Berg and A.W. van Wijk, 'Maatschappelijke belangen', *Ibid.* 1899-14 (8 April 1899), 53-54; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Geheelonthouding', *Ibid.* 1899-40 (7 October 1899), 165; C.J.A. Bosch, 'Ingezonden stukken – Waarom geheelonthouding?', *Ibid.* 1899-43 (28 October 1899), 180; Censor [A. Carlier], 'Ingezonden stukken – Geheelonthouding', *Ibid.* 1899-51 (23 December 1899), 211; A.W. van Wijk, *De drinkdwang in de samenleving* (s.l. 1899); F.L. Ortt, *Rein Leven en geheelonthouding* (Amersfoort 1903); H. de Lang, 'Jezus geheelonthouder en vegetariër', *De Hervorming* 1905-27 (8 July 1905), 209-210; A.W. van Wijk, 'Pro', in: A.W. van Wijk and G. Oosterbaan, *Geheelonthouding* (Baarn 1905), 1-20; M.C. van Wijhe, *Bezwaren tegen geheelonthouding weerlegd* (Utrecht 1909); M. van Leeuwen Pz., 'Ingezonden stukken – Volkspetitionnement voor “plaatselijke keuze”', *De Hervorming* 1913-48 (29 November 1913), 385-386; J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Wat mankeert er toch aan ons?', *Ibid.* 1917-04 (27 January 1917), 27-28, there 27; H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Zóó erg?', *Ibid.* 1920-20 (22 May 1920), 78-79; H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Een tachtigjarige', *Ibid.* 1922-36 (9 September 1922), 283.

<sup>98</sup> E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Prostitutie', *Ibid.* 1878-21 (25 May 1878), 2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1878-22 (1 June 1878), 3; 1878-23 (8 June 1878), 2-3; E.J.W. Koch, 'Binnenland – Bezielend en bezielend', *Ibid.* 1881-03 (22 January 1881), 10; F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1883-21 (26 May 1883), 84; F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Onze leestafel – “De prostitutie-quaestie”', *Ibid.* 1883-24 (16 June 1883), 95-96; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Binnenland – Het congres van de Vereeniging tegen de prostitutie', *Ibid.* 1883-40 (6 October 1883), 158-159; G.J.D. Mounier, *De prostitutie-quaestie. Bedenkingen en opmerkingen naar aanleiding van het behandelde in de vergadering van moderne godgeleerden, gehouden te Amsterdam op 28 en 29 April 1883* (Utrecht 1883); 'Onze leestafel – “De zoogenaamde prostitutie-regeling te Utrecht”', *De Hervorming* 1884-13 (29 March 1884), 53; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Het nationaal congres tegen de prostitutie', *Ibid.* 1889-18 (4 May 1889), 70-71; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Het anti-prostitutie-congres', *Ibid.* 1893-39 (30 September 1893), 154; C.G. Chavannes, 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* 1898-47 (19 November 1898), 189; G.J.D. Mounier, *Eenige stellingen in zake de reglementeering der prostitutie* (Utrecht 1907).

<sup>99</sup> See in particular: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Op een kruissprong', *De Hervorming* 1896-20 (16 May 1896), 78-79; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen', *Ibid.* 1896-21 (23 May 1896), 82-83; A.C.J. van der Kemp, A. Carlier and L. Knappert, 'Ingezonden stukken – Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen', *Ibid.* 1896-24 (13 June 1896), 96; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Gezinsverpleging', *Ibid.* 1904-10 (5 March 1904), 76; J.G.C. Joosting, 'Berichten, enz. – Het tehuisplan', *Ibid.* 1910-52 (24 December 1910), 413-414; A. Snellen, 'Berichten, enz. – Het tehuisplan', *Ibid.* 1910-53 (31 December 1910), 419-420; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Het tehuisplan', *Ibid.* 1911-01 (7

opinion as to which types of social work most contributed to character building, modernists agreed that social work was only salutary if it was ‘gezonde filantropie’ (‘healthful humanitarianism’).<sup>100</sup>

With the term ‘gezonde filantropie’, particularly in use before 1900, modernists meant that the goal of social work should be to give people in need a clear insight into the way their lives could be improved, and to deepen their moral sense. Ideally, it should also make people more pious, but modernists were divided on the question of how implicit or explicit the relationship between religion and social work had to be. Chapter 7 deals with this matter in more detail. Here, it is sufficient to note that the adjective ‘healthful’ implied that there also was an ‘unhealthy’ kind of humanitarianism. This included all forms of welfare work that did not help the poor and needy to attain individual autonomy, but instead kept them in a position of dependency on others.<sup>101</sup> This did not mean that modernists believed that social misery, be it poverty or illness due to detrimental behaviour, was solely someone’s own fault, but that the primary end of social work was to teach someone how to deal with his misery, in an effort to improve his condition. At the same time, the general public should be persuaded to no longer tolerate exploitation of manual labourers, excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages and frequenting houses of ill fame. Although different levels of state intervention in social affairs were propagated within the modernist movement, especially since the gradual rise of politically socialist modernists as of the 1890s, modernists generally favoured private enterprise. Helping the poor and needy should be the expression of social consciousness, of an intrinsic heartfelt urge of those who were in a position to help. If social welfare was not a concern of voluntary associations of citizens, the politically liberal-oriented majority of modernists feared, people would have a perverse incentive to flinch from their moral, civil duty as individuals to be of service to society.<sup>102</sup>

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January 1911), 3; 1911-02 (14 January 1911), 11-12; ‘Binnenland – Vereeniging voor vrijzinnige tehuizen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXXXIV.26774 (27 October 1911), morning paper, 1; F.H.G. van Iterson, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Vrijzinnige tehuizen’, *De Hervorming* 1912-40 (5 October 1912), 322. This discussion had already started in the 1880s. See: ‘Weezenverpleging’, *De Protestant* II.24 (14 June 1884), 2-3; II.26 (28 June 1884), 3; ‘Vereeniging van weesvaders’, *Ibid.* II.28 (12 July 1884), 2; ‘Nog iets over weezenverpleging’, *Ibid.* II.32 (9 August 1884), 2-3.

<sup>100</sup> E.g.: M.E. van der Meulen, ‘Gezonde filantropie – Stichtingen te Bolsward’, *De Hervorming* 1879-49 (6 December 1879), 195-196; J.G. Hintzen, ‘Gezonde filantropie’, *Ibid.* 1879-50 (13 December 1879), 200; 1879-51 (20 December 1879), 203-204; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] ‘Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* 1884-45 (8 November 1884), 179-180, there 179; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Armenzorg’, *Ibid.* 1886-05 (30 January 1886), 17-18; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – In den winter’, *Ibid.* 1890-52 (27 December 1890), 207; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] ‘De 21<sup>e</sup> Ned. Protestantendag’, *Ibid.* 1893-45 (11 November 1893), 177-178, there 178; E. Snellen, ‘Gemeenteleven’, *Ibid.* 1894-19 (11 May 1894), 74; E.C. Knappert, ‘Wat onze geestverwanten in Amerika en in Engeland uitrichten onder de laagste volksklassen’, *Ibid.* 1896-27 (4 July 1896), 105-106; L. Knappert, ‘Vriendelijkheid’, *Ibid.* 1896-39 (26 September 1896), 153-154, there 153; ‘Berichten, enz. – Sentimenteele liefdadigheid’, *Ibid.* 1900-34 (25 August 1900), 259-260; A.J. Adriani, ‘De nieuwe armenwet’, *Ibid.* 1912-12 (23 March 1912), 89-90.

<sup>101</sup> E.g.: M.E. van der Meulen, ‘Gezonde filantropie – Stichtingen te Bolsward’, *Ibid.* 1879-49 (6 December 1879), 195-196; [J.W. Liefstinck in:] ‘Binnenland – De vergadering van moderne predikanten uit de noordelijke provinciën’, *Ibid.* 1881-28 (16 July 1881), 110-111; W. Zaalberg, ‘Christendom en socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1885-09 (28 February 1885), 33-34; ‘Binnenland – Armenverpleging’, *Ibid.* 1885-17 (25 April 1885), 66-67; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Een nog altijd voortwoekerend kwaad’, *Ibid.* 1888-27 (7 July 1888), 106-107, there 107; H.U. Meyboom, *Socialisme* (Amsterdam 1888), 68; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Kostelooze voeding’, *De Hervorming* 1889-05 (2 February 1889), 19; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Weldoen en wél te doen’, *Ibid.* 1889-20 (18 May 1889), 79; Observator, ‘Maatschappelijke vraagstukken’, *Ibid.* 1890-48 (29 November 1890), 190; H.U. Meyboom, *Armen-zorg* (Ouderkerk [1891]); ‘Binnenland – Verkeerde filantropie’, *De Hervorming* 1898-25 (18 June 1898), 100; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Bondswijkverpleging’, *Ibid.* 1898-32 (6 August 1898), 127; A.V., ‘Berichten, enz. – Diakonale conferentie te Alkmaar’, *Ibid.* 1900-42 (20 October 1900), 325-326.

<sup>102</sup> E.g.: ‘Binnenland – Armenverpleging’, *Ibid.* 1885-17 (25 April 1885), 66-67; [H. Goeman Borgesius in:] ‘Onze Protestantendag’, *Ibid.* 1886-46 (13 November 1886), 183-184; Meyboom, *Socialisme*, 45-46; ‘Waar onze taak ligt’, *De Hervorming* 1890-04 (25 January 1890), 13-14; ‘Binnenland – Hoornsche predikantenvereniging’, *Ibid.* 1890-

As already mentioned in relation to alcoholism, prostitution and the nursing of orphans and neglected children, modernists gave different answers to the questions of how social work should be shaped and whether the NPB had a social responsibility to fulfil. With the issue of district nursing, emerging in the 1890s, this was no different. Some modernists felt that district nursing was no task for a religious association to take up, whereas others felt that it provided the NPB with the opportunity to expand the scope of its activities outside of church life. All the same, the value of district nursing was widely recognised in NPB circles – the discussion on district nursing solely evolved around the question of whether this, and social work in general, should be conducted under the banner of the national NPB. An analysis of this discussion reveals that the arguments put forward were imbued with the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors.

The issue of district nursing was first addressed in the modernist movement in late 1891. In an article in *De Hervorming*, Van Loenen Martinet suggested that local NPB branches follow the example of a residents' association in Arnhem, which tried to care for sick locals of limited means in their own homes and to take some weight off their family members' shoulders.<sup>103</sup> Shortly thereafter, the NPB in Rotterdam organised a meeting in which local board member P.R. Mees (1849-1931) proposed that it should be a task of the NPB to promote nursing of the sick as a matter of general interest. Moreover, he put forward the proposition that nursing was "an excellent sphere of action for the cultured woman."<sup>104</sup> In January 1892, several women from The Hague informed the readership of *De Hervorming* that they had recently established an association for the advancement of district nursing. More significant than providing a suitable field of activity for cultured women was that district nursing would bring the poor into personal contact with the well-to-do.<sup>105</sup> E.C. Knappert, who was committed to increasing modernists' involvement with social work, expressed herself in similar terms in an 1896 article. Community centre work in which working-class women came into contact with women from higher social classes had already proved how much good influence the latter exerted on the former. District nursing could infuse this influence directly into family life.<sup>106</sup>

The principal aim of district nursing, as the women from The Hague argued in their 1892 article, was not only to cure the sick, but even more importantly to "contribute to the cancellation, indeed the prevention of moral misery." A district nurse should possess "extraordinary gifts of mind and heart" and she should be "cultured in the true sense. Her contact with everyone has to be beneficent, she has to be the intermediary between the more and the less privileged in our society."<sup>107</sup> An article that was published in April 1892 explicated in further detail how the

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45 (8 November 1890), 179; [Ph.R. Hugenholtz in:] *Observator*, 'Maatschappelijke vraagstukken', *Ibid.* 1890-48 (29 November 1890), 190; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Diaconale fondsen', *Ibid.* 1899-23 (10 June 1899), 97; J. de Louter, 'Antwoord aan mr. F.C.M. Boenders', *Ibid.* 1925-02 (10 January 1925), 12. An early plea for state involvement with poor relief is given in: F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen, 'Geen philanthropie alléén', *Ibid.* 1893-15 (8 April 1893), 57-58; 1893-16 (22 April 1893), 62.

<sup>103</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Klarendal te Arnhem', *Ibid.* 1891-45 (7 November 1891), 181.

<sup>104</sup> "De ziekenverpleging is een uitnemend arbeidsveld voor de beschaafde vrouw." Quoted from: [P.R. Mees in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Afdeling Rotterdam', *Ibid.* 1891-48 (28 November 1891), 192.

<sup>105</sup> 'Binnenland – Wijkverpleging', *Ibid.* 1892-01 (2 January 1892), 3.

<sup>106</sup> E.C. Knappert, 'Wijkverpleging, uitgaande van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond', *Maandblad voor Ziekenverpleging* VI.6 (15 February 1896), 87-89, there 88.

<sup>107</sup> "...om naast de lichamelijke ook de zedelijke ellende te helpen opheffen, ja zelfs te voorkomen!"; "...zulk eene vrouw moet groote gaven van verstand en hart hebben, moet in den waren zin beschaafd zijn. Haar omgang met ieder moet weldadig werken, zij moet de trait-d'union zijn tusschen de meer- en minderbevoorreechten der maatschappij." Quoted from: 'Binnenland – Wijkverpleging', *De Hervorming* 1892-01 (2 January 1892), 3.

association in The Hague tried to link the treatment of physical misery to the prevention of moral misery: “[it] wants to trace and suppress the causes of illness, such as unhealthy houses, filthiness, indecency and social wrongs, and by so doing, it not only wants to take care of the sick, but also of the healthy, who need advice and support.”<sup>108</sup> A couple of years later, after several NPB branches had decided to organise district nursing themselves,<sup>109</sup> W. Zaalberg noticed that many modernists indeed believed

that the nurse should not only be someone who cures a suffering body, but also the darkened, ill, suffering mind. Each time, her work would put her into contact with patients in need of moral support, consolation, encouragement, [patients] in need of deliverance from frightful fear, fear of mind that is provoked by a religious disposition wrapped in superstition, prejudice and error – which oftentimes causes more suffering than bodily pain. It was thought that [the district nurse] could alleviate the religiously oppressed inner life of these [patients] with her word – her stimulating, liberating, rescuing word, not as a propagandist, but out of pity for a constricted soul. It was believed that she could recognise yearning for God in the most peculiar form, and, in connection with that [form], that she could say grace and pray an edifying word of her own on behalf of and together with the sick.<sup>110</sup>

To meet these expectations, everything came down to the personality of the nurse: she could only uplift the poor by advancing their spiritual development if she was spiritually developed enough herself.<sup>111</sup> Her main task was to build up characters in order for the needy to ameliorate the quality of their lives. According to some, district nursing was therefore an activity upon which the NPB should embark, as it would advance the free development of religious life. Then NPB pastor F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr. (1868-1924), for example, chided NPB members who were against the incorporation of social work into the framework of the NPB for having a very limited understanding of what ‘religion’ is. “After all,” he asserted, “this work in itself, nursing the sick in their own homes and consequently safeguarding domestic happiness, is religious work, even if

<sup>108</sup> “De oorzaken der ziekten wil zij helpen opsporen en bekampen, zooals ongezonde woningen, onzindelijkheid, onzedelijkheid en maatschappelijke misstanden, en daarbij hoopt zij hare zorgen niet alleen te bepalen tot de ‘zieken’, zij wil die ook uitstrekken over de gezonden, die raad en steun noodig hebben.” Quoted from: ‘Binnenland – Uit ’s-Gravenhage’, *Ibid.* 1892-16 (16 April 1892), 63.

<sup>109</sup> In her study on the history of district nursing in the Netherlands, Stolk-van Delen mentions that Zwolle was the first NPB branch to organise this kind of social work in 1894, followed by the branches in Amsterdam, Deventer, Rotterdam, Arnhem, ’s-Hertogenbosch, Leiden and Schiedam. See: H.W. Stolk-van Delen, *Wijkverpleging in historisch perspectief. Ontstaan en ontwikkeling van de wijkverpleging (1890-ca. 1930) met aandacht voor aspecten van medicalisering en professionalisering* (Amsterdam 1983), 11. She overlooks that the branch in Haarlem was also involved in district nursing. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De wijkverpleging van den Protestantbond te Haarlem’, *De Hervorming* 1895-26 (29 June 1895), 102-103.

<sup>110</sup> “...omdat men van oordeel was, dat de verpleegster niet enkel zou moeten zijn de verpleegster van een lijdend lichaam, maar ook van het verduisterde, zieke, lijdende gemoed. Haar werk zou haar telkens in aanraking brengen met patiënten, behoeftig aan zedelijken steun, aan bemoediging, aan opwekking van vertrouwen, behoeftig aan verlossing uit bange vrees, uit gemoedsangst door een in bijgeloof, vooroordeel, dwaling gewikkelden godsdienstigen zin gewekt, die dikwerf meer lijden doet dan lichaamsspijn. Men meende, dat zij derzulken godsdienstig bekneld gemoedsleven moest kunnen te gemoetkomen [sic] met haar woord, haar opwekkend, bevrijdend, verlossend woord, niet als propagandiste, maar uit medelijden met een bevangen ziel. Men meende, dat zij in den zonderlingsten vorm het verlangen naar God moest kunnen waardeeren, en zich daarbij aansluitende ook wel voor en met de zieken zou kunnen danken en bidden een eigen gezegd woord.” Quoted from: W. Zaalberg, ‘Bondswijkverpleging’, *Ibid.* 1898-33 (13 August 1898), 132.

<sup>111</sup> Which was implied in the already quoted articles, as well as in: Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Maatschappelijke belangen’, *Ibid.* 1898-40 (1 October 1898), 160; [I. van den Bergh in:] *Verslag NPB 1894*, 35.

religion is never explicitly mentioned during it.”<sup>112</sup> Just as his uncle P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., he believed that social reform had become more urgent than ecclesial-theological transformation, and that district nursing, putting the ideal of ‘free piety’ into practice, contributed to the permeation of the highest religious and ethical principles, advanced by modernism, in modern society.<sup>113</sup>

However, as already mentioned in Zaalberg’s quote, district nursing should not be used as an instrument of propaganda. The NPB should neither see it as a means to make ‘converts’ nor primarily to realise its goal. District nursing would give modernists access to the homes of the sick poor, but these homes should only be entered out of religious compassion for the misfortunate poor and not out of the desire to ‘evangelise’ among them.<sup>114</sup> The contribution that district nursing could make to spiritual development was solely in the personal contact between the nurse and the sick. As the secretary of the NPB branch in Haarlem made clear, nurses “have to be pious women, who understand that the sickbed is not the proper place to discuss religious differences [and] command admiration for their religious view of life because of the work they do and the way in which they conduct it.”<sup>115</sup> It was hoped that the nurse’s character would inspire the sick poor and help them to gain insight into the way they themselves could contribute to the alleviation of their own misery – if it would not increase the ability of the sick poor to cope for themselves, district nursing had failed<sup>116</sup> –, to enhance their moral sense and to advance their relationship with God. The nurse’s influence was, first and foremost, to quote the secretary of the NPB branch in Zwolle, a ‘silent’ one: “not only her advice, but just her personal presence in itself had a good influence on the spirit of the families she has visited. Cleanliness and discipline are spontaneously created.”<sup>117</sup>

To recapitulate, in this brief overview of arguments put forward in the modernist discussion on district nursing, several aspects stand out. District nursing was meant to help the sick poor by bringing them into personal contact with a woman from – and hence with the thoughts, beliefs and norms of – a higher social class. Being well off in a material respect was seen as completely synonymous to being spiritually more developed than a low-class person. As argued before, this might have to do with the idea that people with a working-class background had never had either the incentives or the means (time, money) for self-development,

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<sup>112</sup> “*Immers, die arbeid op zichzelf, ‘t verplegen van zieken in ‘t huisgezin, en ‘t daardoor waarborgen van de welvaart in dat huisgezin tijdens de ziekte, dat is godsdienstige arbeid, al werd daarbij nooit een woord over godsdienst gesproken.*” Quoted from: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Maatschappelijke belangen – De bond en wijkverpleging’, *De Hervorming* 1898-39 (24 September 1898), 156.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afd. Haarlem’, *Ibid.* 1894-10 (10 March 1894), 38.

<sup>114</sup> The beginning of chapter 7 illustrates this.

<sup>115</sup> “*De verpleegsters door een afdeeling uit te zenden moeten volgens haar vrome vrouwen zijn, die begrijpen, dat het ziekenvertrek de plaats niet is voor gesprekken over verschil van inzicht in het godsdienstige. Door den arbeid, dien zij verrichten en de wijze, waarop zij dien verrichten zullen zij eerbied afdwingen voor hare godsdienstige levensopvatting.*” Quoted from: ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afd. Haarlem’, *De Hervorming* 1894-10 (10 March 1894), 38. In a later report on district nursing in the Haarlem branch of the NPB, special emphasis was put on the influence ‘cultured women’ had in a low-class milieu. See: ‘Binnenland – De wijkverpleging van den Protestantenbond te Haarlem’, *Ibid.* 1895-26 (29 June 1895), 102-103.

<sup>116</sup> Van Loenen Martinet repeated this in: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Gezonde philanthropie’, *Ibid.* 1899-25 (24 June 1899), 106.

<sup>117</sup> “*Niet alleen haar raadgeving, maar reeds hare persoonlijke verschijning had een goeden invloed op den geest der gezinnen. Zindelijkheid en orde worden er onwillekeurig gewekt. [...] Het beste deel van het werk der wijkverpleging bestaat in den stillen invloed, die er van onze zuster uitgaat.*” Quoted from: ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Wijkverpleging te Zwolle’, *Ibid.* 1899-03 (21 January 1899), 10.

as well as with the bourgeois character of liberal Protestantism. In any case, it evinces the strong class-consciousness with which modernist thinking was imbued. It was hoped that in the contact between the ‘well-to-do’ and the ‘less fortunate’, the spirit in which the former acted would ‘rain down’ upon the latter, inspiring the latter to strive for an advancement of their own level of spiritual development. The materially and hence spiritually gifted could help them with this. The best way to organise this ‘tutelage’ was in voluntary associations implementing a social welfare scheme that came to be called ‘*toynbeewerk*’, named after British social reformer Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883).<sup>118</sup> *Toynbeewerk* put the idea of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors into practice: it included all kinds of activities in which people who were spiritually highly developed altruistically helped lower-class people to become more ‘civilised’ and, in the specific case of district nursing, to empower them to take responsibility for their own wellbeing. Conducting such social work, a manifestation of ‘practical Christianity’, was seen not just as a civil duty of the civilised classes, but also, and in particular, of cultured *modernist women*, as caring and practising morality were considered to be ‘female’ qualities, intrinsic to the nature of women, and having a modernist philosophy of life was thought to correspond with standing on the then highest level of spiritual development.

The rationale behind *toynbeewerk* was that it would help the poor to build character, which was seen as a prerequisite for social reform. If low-class people would be given alms or more leisure time without being taught how to organise their lives in such a way that they could devote themselves to spiritual self-development, they would never learn how to do whatever they could for themselves to improve their situation. Moreover, if the government were to enforce changes in the fabric of society and take over social welfare work from private organisations, the lower classes would continue to be in a state of dependency, in this case upon the state, and the higher classes would no longer be forced to face the evils in the structure of society themselves. As progressive liberal H. Goeman Borgesius (1847-1917) argued, legislation and government policy should be the expression of the national ‘conscience’.<sup>119</sup> Although far from all modernists shared his party-political orientation, a majority of them reasoned along the same lines as Goeman Borgesius when it came to social reform: the conviction that certain social practices were intolerable should firmly settle in the minds of the Dutch people, and this conviction should be enshrined in legislation. The endeavour to edify the lower classes should therefore be accompanied by the attempt to raise social awareness among the higher classes.

In modernist circles, it was generally acknowledged that individual reform had to precede structural reform. From the 1890s onwards, as the next chapter illustrates, there was a (gradually growing) minority of mostly socialist-oriented modernists who did not agree. However, this minority too acknowledged that the ‘social question’ was, in essence, an ethical-religious question and that individual spiritual reform, be it simultaneously with or after structural changes in the fabric of society, was still needed.

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<sup>118</sup> Dealing with ‘*toynbeewerk*’ in his study on the history of community centres in the Netherlands, Nijenhuis notices that the driving forces behind this kind of social work all had, in one way or another, a link to the NPB. See: H. Nijenhuis, *Werk in de schaduw. Club- en buurthuizen in Nederland, 1892-1970* (Amsterdam and Utrecht 1987), 15.

<sup>119</sup> [H. Goeman Borgesius in:] ‘Onze Protestantendag’, *De Hervorming* 1886-46 (13 November 1886), 183-184. See also: L.J. Wartena, *H. Goeman Borgesius (1847-1917): vader van de verzorgingsstaat. Een halve eeuw liberale en sociale politiek in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2003), esp. 107-118.

## 5. Liberal Protestant Discourse: An Evaluation

‘Aristocracy’ literally means ‘rule of the best’; the ‘best’ being those who are most able to lead due to their possession of certain characteristics (such as virtues, wisdom, descent, or strength of will) that others do not have, or possess only to a lesser extent.<sup>120</sup> Based on an integral and systematic analysis of *De Hervorming* and other modernist periodicals that were issued between 1870 and 1940, it can be concluded that in modernist circles, a dominant discourse existed to which the notion of ‘aristocracy’ was central. That is to say, the notion of ‘*aristocraten naar de geest*’ or a ‘*geestesaristocratie*’ (a ‘*spiritual* aristocracy’) was implicitly entrenched in liberal Protestant thoughts on how the ‘free development of religious life’ ought to be advanced. Here, the adjective ‘spiritual’ included reason, religion, and ethics. In modernist circles, the spiritually ‘best’ or spiritually ‘most developed’ were generally believed to be most fit to set the pace in both church and society. To phrase it in terms borrowed from French sociologist and philosopher Pierre Bourdieu – who distinguishes different forms of ‘capital’ (economic, social, cultural, symbolic) on the accumulation and monopolisation of which status and power relations in society are based –, liberal Protestant discourse had as its underlying principle that those having the most *spiritual* capital are the ones who should set an example to those with less spiritual capital, and as such ought to ‘assist’ the latter in realising their full spiritual potential. Next to ‘capital’, ‘field’ is another concept that Bourdieu uses in his social theory, with which he refers to any setting having its own specific inner logic and requiring a specific ‘habitus’ or code of conduct, in which differences in capital between individuals determine the social hierarchy. It depends on the purpose or *raison d’être* of a particular field who are most fit to set the tone in this field.<sup>121</sup>

The church and social work have been used in this chapter as examples of fields in a ‘Bourdieuian’ sense. As expressed in liberal Protestant discourse, individuals with an academic theological *and* an ecclesial ordination were considered to be the only ones capable of playing first fiddle in the field of the church; their profession ‘evinced’ that they possessed the spiritual capital necessary to fulfil the purpose that this field had, that is, edifying and fortifying the Christian community of faith. As expressed in this same discourse, unmarried women were believed to have the most spiritual capital in the field of social work, illustrated in this chapter by the case of district nursing; having a ‘maternal’ inclination, ‘intrinsic’ to her female nature, to improve the morals of her neighbours while not being a mother herself, an unmarried woman could best fulfil the purpose of social work, that is, caring for the poor and needy, and helping them in becoming less depended on others. Yet, liberal Protestant discourse implied that in all fields, *modernists* possessed the most spiritual capital. After all, reason, religion and ethics – the three components united in the adjective ‘spiritual’ – were regarded as inextricably interrelated in modernist circles. For a ‘correct’ understanding of piety, one had to have reasonable ideas

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<sup>120</sup> In Ancient Greece, birth had soon become the defining criterion of aristocracy. See: A.J.L. Waskey, Jr., ‘Aristocracy’, in: N. Wilson (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece* (New York and London [2006] 2010), 95-96. This was not the case with regard to ‘spiritual aristocrats’. However, children born into modernist families did have an ‘advantage’ over others, as they were socialised in a ‘spiritual aristocratic’ milieu and hence had a good prospect of developing into ‘spiritual aristocrats’ themselves.

<sup>121</sup> Of course, this is only a very brief, simplified paraphrase of Bourdieu’s thoughts on ‘capital’, ‘fields’, and ‘habitus’. Bourdieu laid the theoretical foundations for his social theory in: P.F. Bourdieu, *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris 1979); *Le sens pratique* (Paris 1980). A good English-language introduction to Bourdieu’s work is given in: D.L. Swartz, *Culture and Power. The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago and London 1997).

about God and reality. In turn, a correct understanding of piety was needed to know what true morality entailed. In modernist eyes, liberal Protestantism had the deepest understanding of Christianity, and *hence* of piety, and *hence* of morality.

Although the forms of capital that he discerns are autonomous entities, Bourdieu admits that they are interconnected and not entirely equipollent. In fact, “economic capital,” he argues, “is at the root of all other types of capital,” which he even characterises as “transformed, disguised forms of economic capital.”<sup>122</sup> As sociologist D.L. Swartz, a leading interpreter of Bourdieu’s social theory, elucidates,

it is after all economic capital that makes possible the investment in cultural capital by making possible the investment of time needed to accumulate cultural capital. [...] In general, economic capital appears to convert more easily into cultural capital and social capital than vice versa. [...] Thus, while culture and social networks are forms of capital, they are not exactly on equal footing with money and property.<sup>123</sup>

With regard to spiritual capital, this was no different. ‘Spiritual aristocrats’, those having the most spiritual capital, did not necessarily have to be in a comfortable socio-economic position in theory, but in practice, for the reason mentioned in the quote above, they could only be bourgeois. In working-class families, who were preoccupied with earning their daily bread, there was neither the time nor the money to invest in spiritual development and thus to accumulate spiritual capital all by themselves. In developing themselves spiritually (and as such improving their quality of life), working-class people had to be ‘tutored’ by those who had more spiritual capital, and, consequently, were higher up the social ladder, than they themselves. As implied in the discourse of a spiritual aristocracy of tutors, the idea was that personal contact between someone with a bourgeois background and someone belonging to a lower class would be beneficial to the latter. This applied not only to the field of social work (coming clearly to the fore in the examples mentioned above), but also, implicitly, to the field of the church. After all, there was a class aspect to *volkskerk*-minded modernists’ argument that modernists should stay in the Dutch Reformed Church in order to expose orthodoxy to their good influence: at least in public perception, orthodox Protestants were considered to be mostly *petty* bourgeois.<sup>124</sup> It would be wrong, let alone unfair, to say that modernists were aspiring after social hegemony – on the contrary, an in-depth analysis of the liberal Protestant press can only lead to the conclusion that there was much genuine concern for the lower classes among modernists –, but the application of modernist discourse was class-reinforcing nonetheless. After all, the ‘tutelage’ by a ‘spiritual aristocrat’ basically came down to upholding the values, ideals and life style of the upper bourgeoisie as an example to the lower classes, and the orthodox petty bourgeoisie for that matter. As such, it was closely related to the late nineteenth-century bourgeois ‘civilising offensive’, expounded in chapter 9.

Aristocrats can only take the lead if they have the power to do so, and if their authority is widely accepted among others. This applied to ‘*spiritual* aristocrats’ as well: in order to help others in attaining a higher level of spiritual development, their self-appointed spiritual ‘tutelage’ had to be accepted, which required that those others regarded their values, world view, philosophy

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<sup>122</sup> P.F. Bourdieu, ‘The Forms of Capital’, in: J.G. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (New York 1986), 242-258, there 252.

<sup>123</sup> Swartz, *Culture and Power*, 80.

<sup>124</sup> Cf.: Hendriks, *De emancipatie van de gereformeerden*, 108.



of life, and lifestyle as prestigious or at least as worthy of appropriation. Yet, as of the 1870s, it became less and less likely for modernists to exercise their tutelage as ‘spiritual aristocrats’. Both in the emerging socialist labour movement and among the ‘intellectuals’ who set the pace in cultural life, bourgeois culture received anything but praise, and modernist discourse was recognised as being essentially bourgeois. In addition, Roman Catholics and neo-Calvinists – the last of whom in particular cherished a self-image as petty-bourgeois *kleine luyden* and an image of liberal bourgeois culture as ‘elitist’ – built institutionalised subcultures of their own, ‘arming’ themselves against external influence and exercising more and more power themselves. Moreover, the feeling that liberal Protestantism was not assessed at its true value among liberal politicians, who gave expression to bourgeois culture in the political arena, intensified within the modernist movement towards the end of the nineteenth century. The next three chapters, constituting the fourth part of this study, deal with these matters at length.

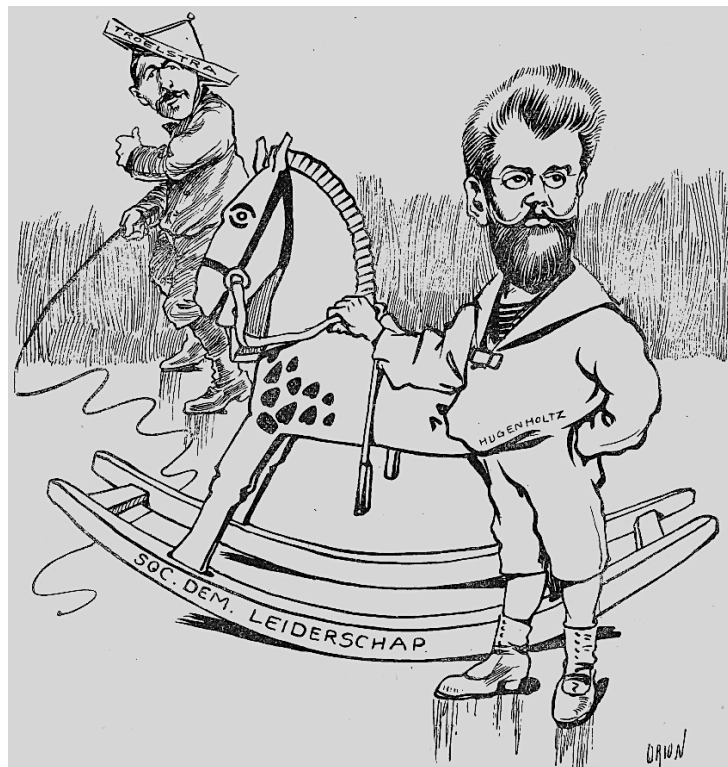
## **PART IV**

Christianising Modern Society:  
Socio-Cultural and Political Life



Dutch Reformed minister J.T. Tenthoff (*central*) was one of the first modernist ministers to identify as a 'socialist'. A socialist-minded lecture that he held in Edam in 1890 caused a good deal of controversy.

*Source: 'Edam in rep en roer', De Amsterdammer 1891-04 (25 January 1891), 7.*



F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr. (*right*) resigned as a minister in 1899 to devote himself entirely to socialist politics.

*Source: 'De leiding der Sociaal-Democratische Partij', Uilenspiegel XXXIV.47 (14 September 1901), 187.*

## 7. CONQUERING THE LOWER CLASSES

### 1. What Now?

On the occasion of the annual meeting of deputies of the Anti-Revolutionary Party on 2 May 1918, Abraham Kuyper wrote what turned out to be one of his last public speeches. Due to severe illness, his confidant A.W.F. Idenburg (1861-1935) had to read it on his behalf. The purport of the speech, intriguingly titled '*Wat nu?*' ('*What Now?*'), was that the ARP had to reinvent itself. Of the three big 'issues' that had dominated national politics and society from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, two had recently been resolved. First, the 'school struggle', which had been the major preoccupation and initially even the *raison d'être* of the ARP and other political parties that were based on religious principles, had come to completion in 1917 with liberals', socialists' and confessionalsists' agreement to treat denominational and public schools entirely equally. Second, the controversy over general enfranchisement had come to an end in 1917 as well, when the right to vote and the right to stand for representative political bodies was granted to all Dutch males and the right to be elected was given to all Dutch females. (Women would receive the right to vote two years later.)<sup>1</sup> Only the 'social question' had still not been satisfactorily settled. Kuyper therefore urged his fellow party members to make this their main priority. Although he did not give concrete suggestions, he did feel that it was necessary to resolve the social question as soon as possible.<sup>2</sup> In his view, a total disruption of society was imminent.<sup>3</sup>

Interestingly, the modernist movement had been confronted with the question 'What now?' several decades before. Strikingly, in modernist circles, the same answer as Kuyper's had been given to this question.

At the 1879 NPB assembly, chairman A. Kuenen heralded that the NPB was entering a new phase: since its founding in 1870, the Dutch League of Protestants had managed to build up its organisation and to gain a footing in many municipalities. What should it do now? According to Kuenen, the time had come to focus on an intensification and extension of its activities. He did not disclose exactly *which* activities he was thinking about.<sup>4</sup> However, in an 1880 article in *De Hervorming*, H.Ph. de Kanter suggested that one of the lecturers who had given a speech after Kuenen, law professor and honorary president of the 1879 meeting J.T. Buys (1826-1893), had shown the NPB the route it had to take. Noticing that general enfranchisement was just a matter of time and arguing that democracy could only remain free from social disorder if citizens were spiritually developed enough to recognise and to serve the common good, Buys had urged the NPB to become "a big social force, striving for the sovereign power and the laws of morality."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a general overview of the process towards general enfranchisement in the Netherlands, see: J. Loots, *Voor het volk, van het volk. Van districtenstelsel naar evenredige vertegenwoordiging* (Amsterdam 2004).

<sup>2</sup> A. Kuyper, *Wat nu? Rede ter opening van de deputatenvergadering, gehouden te Utrecht op 2 mei 1918* (Kampen 1918). See also: B. van Kaam, *Parade der mannenbroeders. Protestants leven in Nederland 1918-1938* (Wageningen [1964]), 14-21; Stoop, "Om het volvoeren", 18-20.

<sup>3</sup> This was no imaginary fear: Dutch socialist leader P.J. Troelstra would actually proclaim revolution in November 1918. However, because large civil unrest could be nipped in the bud, this proclamation came to be known as 'Troelstra's mistake'. See: J.S. Wijne, *De 'vergissing' van Troelstra* (Hilversum 1999).

<sup>4</sup> [A. Kuenen in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Negende algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvoerbond', *De Hervorming* 1879-45 (8 November 1879), 177-178, there 177; [A. Kuenen in:] *Verslag NPB 1879* (Amsterdam 1879), 6-7, there 7.

<sup>5</sup> "...een groote sociale macht, strijdende voor de heerschappij en de wetten der zedelijkheid..." Quoted from: [J.T. Buys in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Zevende Protestantendag', *De Hervorming* 1879-45 (8 November 1879), 178.

Because, as De Kanter believed, it was not realistic to expect that the Dutch Reformed Church would continue to provide the NPB with as many members as in the 1870s, Buys had rightfully advocated the NPB to shift its attention from the ecclesial to the social domain.<sup>6</sup> The association should, De Kanter emphasised, “involve itself in the major social issues of today.” Illustrating what he meant, he called on the NPB to actively take part in discussions on the prevention of alcohol abuse, to press political liberals not to neglect religion as a force for reform, to examine whether the recent revisions of the penal and civil codes contributed to the advancement of civilisation, and to concern itself with improving the quality of primary education.<sup>7</sup>

Also urging the NPB to switch its focus from church to society, J. van Loenen Martinet more explicitly hinted at the eradication of inequalities and troubles plaguing capitalist, industrialised modern society in 1883. “Our regulations,” he exclaimed, “speak about religious life in every sphere. How many needs are there in society, to which we belong, that require alleviation! How many evils call for a cure! How many wrongs need to be eliminated!”<sup>8</sup> At the 1886 annual NPB meeting, Goeman Borgesius even urged the NPB to strike at the very fabric of contemporary society: “the League of Protestants [...] aims to permeate society from within with an invigorating spirit, which is impossible if it does not penetrate to the root of evil, if it does not openly fight against rotten conditions, which are an actual protest against the Christian disposition for which it strives.”<sup>9</sup> Goeman Borgesius professed to notice that a fierce class struggle was waging in Europe and acknowledged that political socialism tried everything it could to relieve the poor. However, socialism was not the right remedy for existing social malpractices: “from a religious-ethical point of view, it is hard to determine which evil is worse: the old economic system with its idolisation of self-interest, or socialism with its idolisation of the all-controlling oppressive state.”<sup>10</sup> During that same meeting, Mennonite minister J.W. van der Linden (1846-1923) gave a speech with a purport similar to that of Goeman Borgesius’s lecture. He too recognised “the noble core of socialism” as being the heartfelt intolerability of social injustice, and exhorted the NPB to help to bring about a solution of the ‘social question’, in order “to avert social upheaval [...] [or] national disaster” and “to lead the impending storm of social-democratic wishes in a safe and calm bed or to contribute to that.”<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> H.Ph. de Kanter, ‘Twee voorzitters’, *Ibid.* 1880-15 (10 April 1880), 57-59.

<sup>7</sup> “...dat de Bond zich minge in de groote sociale vraagstukken van den dag...” Quoted from: H.Ph. de Kanter, ‘Twee voorzitters’, *Ibid.* 1880-16 (17 April 1880), 61-62, there 61.

<sup>8</sup> “Ons reglement spreekt van godsdienstig leven op elk gebied. Hoe vele nooden zijn er niet in de maatschappij, waartoe wij behooren, die voorziening vragen! Hoevele kwalen riepen niet om genezing! Hoevele misstanden moeten niet uit den weg worden geruimd!” Quoted from: Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*, 8. It remains unclear on which occasion Van Loenen Martinet said this. Neither in *De Hervorming*, nor in the official report of the 1883 annual NPB meeting is this quote mentioned.

<sup>9</sup> “De Protestantenvond [...] stelt zich ten doel de maatschappij inwendig met een levenwekkenden geest te bezielen, en dat is onmogelijk, als hij niet doordringt tot den wortel van het kwaad, als hij niet met open vizier den strijd aanbindt tegen verrotte toestanden, die een levend protest zijn tegen den christelijken zin, waarvoor hij ijvert.” Quoted from: Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*, 8; H. Goeman Borgesius, ‘De Ned. Protestantenvond en zijne roeping tegenover de sociale kwestie’, in: C.J. Sickesz et al., *Het maatschappelijk vraagstuk beschouwd uit het oogpunt van het godsdienstig-zedelijk leven* (Amsterdam 1887), 22-58, there 57.

<sup>10</sup> “Van godsdienstig-zedelijk standpunt is het moeilijk uit te maken, welk kwaad grootter is: het oude economische stelsel met zijne vergoding van het eigenbelang of wel het socialisme met zijne vergoding van den alles regelenden dwangstaat.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>11</sup> “...de edele kern van het socialisme...”; “...sociale omwenteling [...] die volksramp...”; “...teneinde den dreigenden storm van sociaal-democratische wenschen in veilige of kalme bedding te leiden of te helpen leiden.”

The social activities the NPB (attempted to) set up, and politically socialist as well as communist sympathies within the modernist movement, has already been written about. In a chapter in the 2014 volume *Het vrijzinnige web*, for example, C.M. van Driel deals with the 'Commission for Social Interests' that the national NPB established in 1887. Although he tends to explain the creation of this commission too narrowly within the context of left-wing liberals and their relationship with the NPB, thereby failing to recognise that the wish to make the NPB more socially active was shared by many members with diverse political persuasions and connected to the NPB's incessant endeavour to create a distinct profile for itself, Van Driel correctly notices that the NPB had difficulty in taking concrete social initiatives because such initiatives became easily politicised.<sup>12</sup> In the same volume, H. Noordegraaf, who has dedicated several biographies to so-called '*rode dominees*' ('red ministers'), illustrates how much resistance political socialists were confronted with within the modernist movement.<sup>13</sup> This chapter does not concern itself with social initiatives created under the colours of the NPB or socialist sympathies existing among modernists as such. Rather, it interprets *why* the organised modernist movement never managed to become a big social force, both in terms of influence and appeal. It does so, not by pointing to a lack of organisation or internal consensus within the modernist movement, but instead by looking at the consequences modernist discourse had for modernists' relationship with the socialist labour movement.

## 2. The Social Question and the NPB

The 'social question', an umbrella term encompassing all the negative effects of industrialisation on the living and working conditions of wage labourers and the tensions these effects brought about in society, was not entirely absent from the NPB agenda in the 1870s. In 1874, for instance, the NPB branch in The Hague touched upon it while discussing the book *The True History of Joshua Davidson*. *De Hervorming* had recently published a Dutch translation of this book in serial form, accompanied by the warning that Mosselmans and Van Gilse, the then editors-in-chief of *De Hervorming*, were reluctant to present it to their readership. The anonymous author

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Quoted from: J.W. van der Linden, 'De Ned. Protestantenbond en zijne roeping tegenover de sociale kwestie', in: Sickesz et al., *Het maatschappelijk vraagstuk*, 59-74, there 63, 65, 69.

<sup>12</sup> C.M. van Driel, 'Hand in hand? De gecompliceerde verhouding tussen vrijzinnig-protestanten en politiek liberalen', in: *Het vrijzinnige web*, 103-139. Referring to an article I published in *Tijdschrift voor Tijdschriftstudies* in 2013, Van Driel blames me for making "a gross dichotomy between liberals and socialists, whereas there primarily was a fragmentation amongst political liberals. Socialists only entered the scene shortly before 1900." ("...een grove tweedeling construeert tussen liberalen en socialisten, terwijl het primair ging om verdeeldheid tussen liberalen onderling, waar pas kort voor de eeuwwisseling socialisten [...] bijkwamen.") See: *Ibid.*, 138-139, note 117. However, in my 2013 article, I do not claim anywhere that there existed a sharp dichotomy between political liberal and socialist modernists before 1900, and definitely not in a *party* political sense. It is true that political socialism became a (small) force of power within the modernist movement only after 1900, although some, such as Dutch Reformed minister W. Bax, already joined the SDAP in the 1890s. What I do state in my 2013 article is that a small, albeit growing and rather loudly present number of modernists, of whom Van Loenen Martinet was one of the most prominent, were explicitly shown to be attracted to 'socialism' in a non-politicised sense *before* 1900. Already in the early 1890s, voices in the NPB had accused *De Hervorming* of becoming 'too socialist'. Already then, some modernists had been of the opinion that there existed a dichotomy between socialist and non-socialist modernists, with 'socialist' not referring to specific political parties, but rather to a cultural phenomenon or philosophy of life. Van Driel does not differentiate between socialism as a party political and a more general cultural phenomenon, failing to recognise that there had been a good deal of tension between socialist and non-socialist modernists already in the late nineteenth century.

<sup>13</sup> H. Noordegraaf, 'Water en vuur. Vrijzinnig-protestanten en socialisten vóór de Eerste Wereldoorlog', in: *Het vrijzinnige web*, 141-156.

of *Joshua Davidson* let her protagonist put forward radically socialist ideas, not so much to propagate political socialism, but rather to lay bare the social incompetence of the church.<sup>14</sup> In the branch in The Hague, people generally felt that the book had a tenor baneful to Christianity and society, but welcomed it as a stimulus to intensely propagate ‘pure’ Christianity as a remedy for existing social evils.<sup>15</sup> During the *Protestantendag* of 1875, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. and H.Ph. de Kanter hoped to start an association-wide discussion on the social question by arguing that NPB members had the duty to socially and intellectually educate and elevate the individual.<sup>16</sup> However, an exchange of opinions failed to occur.<sup>17</sup> Only in the 1880s did the social question gradually come to be the most hotly debated topic in NPB circles.

In spite of all the discussions on social issues and the calls for action, the NPB did not actively take part in social work itself. The issue at stake was not whether NPB members acknowledged the need for and importance of such work. On the contrary, striving for social reform was in the genes of the modernist movement. But there was no consensus as to which activities would be most effective and most consistent with modernist principles, nor on the question of whether the NPB should organise social activities itself. Some, such as C.G. Chavannes, interpreted the word ‘religious’ in a restricted sense, arguing that a religious association such as the NPB should not concern itself with material matters.<sup>18</sup> Others, such as Goeman Borgesius, reasoned that it was impossible to draw a rigid line between material and spiritual affairs: under the present social circumstances, spiritual development, deemed essential for social reform and connected to the NPB’s aim to let religious life develop in freedom, was unrealisable.<sup>19</sup> These modernists saw it as the duty of the NPB to take a firm stand on social issues and to organise *toynbeewerk*: in the contact between the lower and higher classes, the former would be helped to improve their quality of life, whereas the latter would be confronted with lower-class misery and, so it was hoped, would gain a stronger feeling of solidarity with the lower classes.

Regarding issues on which some modernists hoped that the NPB would make a public statement, the excessive consumption of alcoholic beverages, one of the matters De Kanter referred to in his already-mentioned 1880 article, is a good illustration of the NPB’s social ‘incompetency’. Three weeks after De Kanter made his appeal, Ph.R. Hugenholtz gave a response in *De Hervorming*. He agreed with De Kanter that the NPB could not remain silent about threats to public well-being and social harmony. However, he opposed the idea that the NPB should pin all its members down to one particular statement. Its only task was to incite its

<sup>14</sup> In the third edition, published in 1872 only three months after the first edition, the author’s name was revealed: Eliza Lynn Linton (1822-1898). See: N.F. Anderson, ‘Eliza Lynn Linton. “The Rebel of the Family” (1880) and Other Novels’, in: B.L. Harman and S. Meyer (eds.), *The New Nineteenth Century. Feminist Readings of Underread Victorian Fiction* (New York and Abingdon 1996), 117-134, there 126.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Mededeelingen en berichten – Binnenland’, *De Hervorming* 1874-42 (15 October 1874), 3.

<sup>16</sup> The social question should have been discussed at the meeting in 1874, but could not be dealt with due to lack of time. See: ‘Het Protestantbond en de Protestantendag’, *Ibid.* 1874-46 (12 November 1874), 1.

<sup>17</sup> Only two persons present felt the need to respond. A certain d’Ablaing van Giessenburg, probably civil servant W.J. baron d’Ablaing van Giessenburg (1812-1892), could not come to the purport of his remarks due to lack of time. A certain De Haas, probably minister D.C. de Haas (1834-1907), who represented the branch of Het Bildt during the annual NPB meeting that preceded the *Protestantendag*, said that the churches, including the NPB, were not in a position to solve the social question. After all, De Haas argued, the social question was a purely material affair, implying that churches could and should deal only with spiritual affairs. See: ‘De derde Nederlandsche Protestantendag’, *Ibid.* 1875-45 (11 November 1875), 2-3, there 3.

<sup>18</sup> C.G. Chavannes, ‘Binnenland – Jozua Davidson en J.T.’, *Ibid.* 1885-38 (19 September 1885), 151.

<sup>19</sup> Van Driel, ‘Hand in hand?’, 113.

members to take part in social activities. As modernists were not necessarily of the same opinion, everyone should have free choice to decide how to shape social consciousness.<sup>20</sup> Later that year, during the annual NPB meeting, De Kanter requested the general board of the NPB to press the government for more measures against alcohol abuse. Former Dutch Reformed minister W. de Meijer (1839-1909), who was a moderately liberal parliamentarian at the time, vehemently opposed this request. He felt that it was just a pretext for the progressively liberal De Kanter to turn the NPB into a social pressure group. P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. repeated the objections his brother had made in *De Hervorming* several months before. As a concession, De Kanter changed his request: now, he only asked the representatives at the meeting to endorse the principle underlying his original request – that is, to endorse that the NPB needed to take social work in hand. Kuenen could not go along in this. After all, in De Kanter's amended request, it was still implied that the NPB should find *concrete* solutions to the social question. Although chairman R.T.H.P.L.A. van Boneval Faure (1826-1909) agreed with Kuenen and asked De Kanter to withdraw his amended request, the latter did not give in. After, as the report in *De Hervorming* has it, “many, sometimes even bitter, at least vehement words,” the amended request was rejected “with a very tiny minority.”<sup>21</sup> This discussion proves that materialising social commitment was a delicate affair in NPB circles: the already brittle unity of the varicoloured NPB community would be imperilled if one specific opinion were to be favoured over others. Later attempts to persuade the general board of the NPB to make statements about alcoholism, prostitution or social lawmaking foundered for the same reason.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the discussions on the relationship between the NPB and *toynbeewerk*, district nursing provides an exemplary case. It has already been explained why district nursing received much attention in modernist circles and why some NPB branches eagerly began to organise this kind of *toynbeewerk* themselves as of the mid-1890s. After the decision was made at the general NPB meeting of 1897 to detach district nursing from the Commission for Social Interests and to transfer it to a separate commission, a fierce controversy erupted that lasted for more than a year.<sup>23</sup> Some interpreted the establishment of a commission solely devoted to district nursing to be first and foremost a propagandistic endeavour.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, coordinating district nursing explicitly under the banner of the national NPB, opponents argued, would make it impossible for those who did not want to, or who could not, join the NPB to

<sup>20</sup> Ph.R. Hugenholtz, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Tweeërlei werkzaamheid’, *De Hervorming* 1880-19 (8 May 1880), 74-75.

<sup>21</sup> “Na vele, soms zelfs ietwat bittere, althans heftige woorden, wordt de motie in omvraag gebracht en met zeer kleine meerderheid verworpen.” Quoted from: ‘Tiende jaarfeest van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond te Deventer gevierd’, *Ibid.* 1880-45 (6 November 1880), 177-179, there 179. See also: *Verslag NPB 1880*, 43-46.

<sup>22</sup> E.g.: ‘Binnenland – Ned. Vereeniging tegen de Prostitutie’, *De Hervorming* 1884-28 (12 July 1884), 112-113, there 113; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – De Drankwet en wat wij daarvoor nog kunnen doen’, *Ibid.* 1885-13 (28 March 1885), 50; E.J.W. Koch, ‘Strijd tegen den drankduivel’, *Ibid.* 1886-49 (4 December 1886), 196-197; J. van Dam van Isselt, ‘Persoonlijke dienstplicht’, *Ibid.* 1889-42 (19 October 1889), 166-167; P. van der Meulen, ‘Geheelonthouding in de kerken in Schotland’, *Ibid.* 1892-11 (12 March 1892), 42; P. van der Meulen, ‘Geheelonthouding’, *Ibid.* 1892-17 (23 April 1892), 66-67; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De 23<sup>e</sup> algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1893-45 (11 November 1893), 179; ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Drankbestrijding’, *Ibid.* 1900-47 (24 November 1900), 361-362.

<sup>23</sup> *Verslag NPB 1897*, 26-28.

<sup>24</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Bondswijkverpleging’, *De Hervorming* 1898-32 (6 August 1898), 127; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘De bond en “maatschappelijk werk”’, *Ibid.* 1898-40 (1 October 1898), 159.



participate. That smacked of confessionalist particularism.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, district nursing only had an intrinsic value if it was the manifestation of a *communal* heart-felt religious urge, which was not possible if it was organised centrally. Peculiarly, it was Van Loenen Martinet who put forward this argument – peculiar, because he had been one of the biggest advocates of district nursing in NPB circles and had never made reservations before.<sup>26</sup> In an article in *De Hervorming* and again at the 1898 general NPB meeting, he explained himself.

In a technical exposé revolving around matters of definition and principle, Van Loenen Martinet stated that the NPB could embark upon district nursing for two reasons: as a means to advance religious life, and hence to realise the NPB's aim, or as an expression of religious life itself. Only in the latter case was district nursing exclusively treated as a good in itself. So far, only those NPB branches functioning as genuine religious communities had set up social activities, including district nursing. In these branches, social work was done solely “because people felt the inner urge to do so, as a manifestation of their feeling of responsibility, sense of rightfulness, love, [and] religious-ethical life.” Under normal conditions, Van Loenen Martinet added, such “a vital urge” should automatically result in “social activities.”<sup>27</sup> Organising social work within the framework of the national NPB, on the other hand, could not be an expression of religious life itself: contrary to some local branches, the national NPB was not a congregation-like religious community, but an association. Furthermore, there was “difference of opinion” among NPB members concerning “questions of a social and economic nature.” Those members who, for one reason or another, wanted to be socially active in a different way would nonetheless be forced to share in the responsibility for district nursing if it was embedded in the organisational structure of the NPB.<sup>28</sup> At the 1898 annual meeting, a grand majority expressed agreement with Van Loenen Martinet, although dissident, disappointed voices made themselves loudly known.<sup>29</sup> Particularly in the weeks prior to the meeting, major disagreement had surfaced in the columns of *De Hervorming*. One of the discussants, W.C. van Manen, therefore stated that the late Kuenen had been right in feeling that the NPB would hazard its life if it dared to be active in the field of social work.<sup>30</sup>

The Commission for District Nursing was immediately discontinued at the 1898 meeting.<sup>31</sup> The Commission for Social Interests continued to exist, but was strictly assigned to only stimulate social consciousness without organising any actual social work. It thereby basically became redundant, but managed to prolong its existence until 1908.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Grondwetschennis’, *Ibid.* 1898-34 (20 August 1898), 145; W.C. van Manen, ‘De bond en wijkverpleging’, *Ibid.* 1898-38 (17 September 1898), 151-152, there 151. Van Loenen Martinet was countered in: W. Zaalberg and W.H. Stenfert Kroese, ‘Bondswijkverpleging’, *Ibid.* 1898-35 (27 August 1898), 149.

<sup>26</sup> During the 1897 general meeting, he had even urged the NPB to proclaim that district nursing was one of its main priorities. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] *Verslag NPB 1897*, 26-27.

<sup>27</sup> “...omdat men er zich innerlijk toe gedrongen voelde als uiting van zijn verantwoordelijkheidsgevoel, zijn rechtsbesef, zijn liefde, zijn godsdienstig-zedelijk leven.”; “En van dien innerlijke levensdrang is in onzen tijd ook sociale werkzaamheid in allerlei vorm het gevolg.” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘De bond en “maatschappelijk werk”’, *De Hervorming* 1898-40 (1 October 1898), 159.

<sup>28</sup> “...verschil van inzicht in vraagstukken van maatschappelijken en economischen aard...” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘De bond en “maatschappelijk werk”’, *Ibid.* 1898-41 (8 October 1898), 163. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Een inconsequentie?’, *Ibid.* 1898-48 (26 November 1898), 191; 1898-49 (3 December 1898), 195.

<sup>29</sup> *Verslag NPB 1898*, 25-27.

<sup>30</sup> W.C. van Manen, ‘De bond en wijkverpleging’, *De Hervorming* 1898-38 (17 September 1898), 151-152, there 152.

<sup>31</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘De algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1898-46 (12 November 1898), 183-184, there 184.

<sup>32</sup> *Handelingen NPB 1908*, 13.

### 3. Views on Modernism in the Socialist Labour Movement

The fear that the fragile internal harmony in the NPB would be hazarded if specific solutions to the social question were adopted as official NPB policy thus immobilised the social activity of the NPB. This was all the more troublesome because modernists came to realise that their movement had difficulty in reaching the working class. As early as the early 1880s, complaints were uttered that labourers were hardly represented in the readership of *De Hervorming*, the main vehicle with which modernists could influence public opinion.<sup>33</sup> A decade later, modernists noticed that the distance between their movement and the working class had become a yawning gulf.<sup>34</sup> At a meeting in the NPB branch of Haarlem in 1891, for example, De Kanter, again urging the NPB to become socially more active, warned his audience that among the attendants of modernist religious services working-class people were absent.<sup>35</sup> As the Roman Catholic Church and the neo-Calvinist Anti-Revolutionary Party took working-class interests to heart, modernist-minded philosopher W. Meijer (1842-1926) argued several weeks later in *De Hervorming* that the modernist movement should drop its social timorousness if it wanted to be socially relevant.<sup>36</sup>

De Kanter and Meijer both created a sense of urgency by stressing that while the modernist movement had failed to exert a large attraction on labourers, another movement had managed to get a strong foothold on the working class in the meantime: the labour or, narrowed down to the field of politics, socialist movement.<sup>37</sup> It partially resembled the modernist movement on a very abstract level, in the sense that it was also driven by the conviction that social reform was needed. Yet, it did not 'compete' with the modernist movement in the same way as, for instance, Kuyper and his followers did: the modernist and neo-Calvinist movements propagated mutually exclusive religious views to pave the way for a reformation of ecclesial and social life, whereas the labour movement promoted the economic interests of a particular social class.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the rise of the labour movement did deepen the existing gap between the working class and the modernist movement.<sup>39</sup> During its formative phase, in the 1880s and 1890s, Dutch political socialism was suffused with an anti-religious spirit in general and an antimodernist spirit in particular. F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, the first socialist leader in the Netherlands, combined his

<sup>33</sup> E.g.: H.K., Jr., 'Wenken voor het maatschappelijk vraagstuk', *De Hervorming* 1882-09 (4 March 1882), 34; Een leek, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Van huishoudelijken aard', *Ibid.* 1886-18 (1 May 1886), 70.

<sup>34</sup> E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] 'Binnenland – De Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1896-45 (7 November 1896), 178-179, there 179; Frisius, 'De moderne richting en de werkende stand', *Ibid.* 1899-15 (15 April 1899), 57-58, there 57.

<sup>35</sup> [H.Ph. de Kanter in: M.J. Mees], 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Een en ander uit de afdeeling Haarlem', *Ibid.* 1891-14 (4 April 1891), 54-55, there 54.

<sup>36</sup> W. Meijer, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1891-18 (2 May 1891), 71-72.

<sup>37</sup> De Vos, seeing the labour movement primarily as a trade union movement, considers the labour movement to be broader than the socialist movement, because there were also non-socialist trade unions. See: De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme in Nederland in het kader van zijn tijd* I, 39. However, I see Catholic and orthodox Protestant trade unions as part of the Roman Catholic and neo-Calvinist movements, which eventually developed into institutionalised subcultures or 'pillars'. These trade unions did not exist to represent the interests of labourers as such, but to unite people, in this case labourers, on the basis of a particular religious persuasion, as all associations belonging to the same pillar. For this reason, I use the terms 'labour movement' and 'socialist movement' interchangeably, seeing the latter as the political manifestation of the former – that is, as the totality of all *secular* groups and political parties rooted in Marxist ideology.

<sup>38</sup> Meijer could therefore argue that being a modernist and at the same time being a socialist in a political sense were perfectly compatible. He considered the promotion of working-class interests as pursuing a 'purer' society and hence even urged modernist ministers to pro-actively support the labour movement.

<sup>39</sup> Verberne and De Vos both place the emergence of the labour movement around 1870. See: L.G.J. Verberne, *De Nederlandse arbeidersbeweging in de negentiende eeuw* (Utrecht and Antwerp 1959), 13; De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme* I, 39.

promotion of working-class interests with criticism of religion, which he concentrated on modernists. As such, he firmly established a negative image of the latter in the labour movement, an image that would not be amended in succeeding decades.

As soon as Domela became a minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church, in 1870, he began to actively participate in the modernist movement by attending national NPB meetings and writing articles in the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and *De Hervorming*. However, after being confronted with ubiquitous pauperism in his first congregation in Harlingen, losing his wife soon after the birth of a son, and reading *The True History of Joshua Davidson*, Domela began to increasingly doubt the tenability of the notion of a merciful God, a notion modernists still shared with their orthodox fellow Christians, and became more and more alienated from the church in the course of the 1870s.<sup>40</sup> In 1876, in a booklet called '*Het sociale vraagstuk en de kerk*' ('*The Social Issue and the Church*'), he openly and ferociously denounced what he perceived as the social indifference of the church: the social question should be recognised as a question of class conflict between the working or proletarian class – the terms are Domela's – on the one hand, and the propertied bourgeoisie, whose interests were promoted by the church, on the other. He implicitly blamed the church for comforting low-class people by preaching satisfaction and piety instead of demanding material improvements in the working and living conditions of the proletariat.<sup>41</sup> Domela quickly lost all hope that the church would ever become the great instigator of social reform, and fully embraced political socialism, due to his contacts with the German non-ecclesial *freireligiöse Bewegung* (Free Religious Movement), many of whose members were socialist party members. When the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, which religiously somewhat resembled the *freireligiöse* congregations in Germany, offered itself as an alternative to church life in late 1877, Domela nonetheless kept aloof from it, because, as he later explained, it was too bourgeois.<sup>42</sup> Trying to move the NPB in a politically socialist direction stopped being an option for him as well, as became clear during a national controversy over the NPB membership of his socialist-minded acquaintance H.C.J. Krijthe.<sup>43</sup> If he really wanted to spread the message of his new socialist 'faith', he therefore felt that there was only one conscious thing to do: leave organised religious life altogether.

In 1879, Domela gave two last sermons in which he justified this decision. He began by stating that he whole-heartedly disliked denominationalism. The historical differences between them had become irrelevant, but church denominations still only cared about their own membership. Lutheran deacons, for example, only supported poverty-stricken fellow church members. Lutheran ministers, such as Domela himself, were called to exclusively serve the interests of the Lutheran community. By continuing their separate existence, church denominations implied that it was not enough to be a Christian; from the perspective of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, being a Lutheran apparently was the ultimate fulfilment of man's destiny. Domela no

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<sup>40</sup> This whole process is described in more detail in: Fafié, 'Van het revolutiejaar tot het begin van de Eerste Wereldoorlog', 557-565; J.W. Stutje, 'De vele geloven van Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis', in: M.P.A. de Baar, Y.B. Kuiper and J.W. Renders (eds.), *Biografie en religie. De religieuze factor in de biografie* (Amsterdam 2011), 40-54; J.W. Stutje, *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis. Een romantische revolutionair* (Antwerp etc. 2012), 51-78.

<sup>41</sup> F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Het sociale vraagstuk en de kerk* (s.l. [1876]).

<sup>42</sup> F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Typen. Karakter-studies I* (Amsterdam 1903), 1-2; Stutje, *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*, 77.

<sup>43</sup> Dealt with in note 44 in chapter 3.

longer wanted to call the suspicion on himself that he agreed with this.<sup>44</sup> But it was not only dissatisfaction with the existing, denominationally fragmented church life that forced Domela to resign as a Lutheran minister; the institution of the church as such impelled him to leave church life behind. The church, he argued, essentially did two things: it claimed that faith in God, about whose being and even existence nothing could be said with certainty, is the prerequisite for a human to realise his spiritual potential, and it separated those who endorsed this claim from the rest of humankind. Domela, however, regarded society in its entirety as his ‘church’, and being human instead of being Christian as the supreme good in life. His religion was not an unsubstantiated faith in God, but “the religion of reason,” which was based on the idea that “knowledge leads to the liberation of the human spirit” and only concerned itself with the here and now. His goal in life was to advance humanity or humanism.<sup>45</sup> Because his religion conflicted with and was even diametrically opposed to ecclesial religion, it was an illusion to think that striving for a thorough reformation of the church would ever succeed. What is more, Domela argued, the church as such had already become a redundant body: it was well on its way to completely losing its social significance, as it did not concern itself with what the masses needed most. Accusing modernists of being inconsistent, Domela therefore felt that leaving the church was the logical consequence of dissatisfaction with church life. Yet, establishing voluntary associations to do what the church refrained from doing was not enough; the roots of social wrongs should be eradicated, which, Domela implied, required structural changes to the fabric of social life.<sup>46</sup>

After his abdication, Domela continued to reflect on and write about theological issues. Even though he would leave his Christian background further and further behind him as time progressed, his view on Christianity and its shortcomings would not fundamentally change after 1879 – as theologian C.W. Mönnich argues: “in [his farewell sermons], we find the most important outline of his theology. [...] [Throughout the rest of his life], we repeatedly find lines of thought that follow naturally from the perspectives outlined in his 1879 sermons.”<sup>47</sup> This certainly applies to Domela’s stand on the modernist movement.

Domela became a prolific journalist, during the first years after his abdication ventilating his opinions primarily in *Recht voor Allen* (*Justice to All*), a socialist magazine that he had begun publishing on 1 March 1879, exactly six months before he left the church, and in *De Dageraad*. In this last periodical, a first article written by Domela had appeared in 1878, containing a condemnation of the obligation to swear an oath to God in judicial and administrative contexts.<sup>48</sup> However, being a reprint, this article had not been written with the intention of its

<sup>44</sup> F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Mijn afscheid van de kerk. Twee toespraken* (Haarlem 1879), 3-10. An extensive, and exemplary, reaction to Domela’s resignation from a modernist perspective appeared in: ‘Een afscheid van de kerk’, *De Vrijheid* VII.42 (18 October 1879), 1-2; VII.43 (25 October 1879), 3-4; VII.44 (1 November 1879), 1-2; VII.45 (8 November 1879), 1-2; VII.46 (15 November 1879), 1-2; ‘Ter zelfverdediging’, *Ibid.* VII.47 (22 November 1879), 2. In response, Domela blamed modernists for still being supernaturalists without acknowledging it; he argued that their claim to believe in the supersensible instead of the supernatural came down to supernaturalism in practice. See: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, ‘Aan de redactie van “De Vrijheid”’, *Ibid.* VII.49 (6 December 1879), 3-4.

<sup>45</sup> “...godsdienst der rede...”; “...’t weten [voert] tot bevrijding van den menschelijken geest.” See: Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Mijn afscheid van de kerk*, 3-4, 10-16, 25. The quotes are on p. 15 and p. 25.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 22, 26, 29-30.

<sup>47</sup> “In laatstgenoemde brochure vinden wij de belangrijkste lijnen van zijn theologie. [...] Telkens vinden wij ook later nog lijnen, die in het verlengde der perspectieven van 1879 liggen.” Quoted from: C.W. Mönnich, ‘Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, theologie en anti-theologie’, in: J. Frieswijk, J.J. Kalma and Y.B. Kuiper (eds.), *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis. De apostel van de Friese arbeiders* (Drachten and Leeuwarden 1988), 63-79, there 64.

<sup>48</sup> Also published as a separate brochure: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Het vraagstuk der eedsformule* (Haarlem 1878).

being published in the freethinkers' magazine. Only in 1880 did Domela start to deliberately contribute to *De Dageraad* – his first article being on Spinoza and, significantly, his second article attacking the modernist movement.<sup>49</sup> Hiding behind the pen name 'Philaethes' ('he who loves the Truth'), Domela mockingly portrayed modernists as "laughable people" who accused freethinkers of ridiculing faith without sincerely studying Christianity, but who were not even able to clarify what they themselves meant by 'Christianity'. He was convinced that reason and faith related to each other as exact opposites and that only the faculty of reason could bring a man to truth. He accordingly caricatured modernism as "a mélange of the one [reason] and the other [faith], and the recipe for creating or the tool for anatomising ecclesial modernists is: blend a bit of faith with a bit of reason, mix them firmly together until a kind of pap comes into being, of which the thin layer floating on top is made of reason and the underlying rest, the actual core, is made of faith."<sup>50</sup> In his criticism of religion, Domela did not exclusively draw a bead on the modernist movement; disliking the church and religion in general, he gave both modernists and orthodox a piece of his mind. As he explained in *De Dageraad* in 1881,

the church is the institution that is always, in any form whatsoever, opposed to free thought. From the devout Catholic with his: 'I believe because it is absurd' to modernist professor Opzoomer, who calls the recognition of God's existence a truth not based on reason but on emotion, to the pastor of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, who believes 'with all his heart' – all of them are opposed to free thought, which wants life to be guided by Reason. They are all supernaturalists, i.e. they believe in a world of invisible and unseen things, which is beyond sensory perception, beyond observation. [...] An unreasonable faith can never be based on reason and it is therefore that all modernist as well as orthodox theology is to be condemned, not because it is modernist or orthodox, but because it is theology.<sup>51</sup>

Yet, Domela did take a firmer line with modernists. The reason for that, as he for example made clear in 1882 in a controversy with G.J.D. Mounier (1854-1917), a mathematician who regularly contributed to *De Hervorming*, was that modernists pretended to have a philosophy of life and world view in perfect consistency with reason. In response to an article in which Mounier had asserted that mathematics and physics could not be employed to deny the existence of the supersensible on scientific grounds, and in fact rather added to the development of religious life,<sup>52</sup> Domela accused Mounier of putting forward a circular argument: the latter stated that God

<sup>49</sup> For the article on Spinoza, see: Criticus [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], 'Spinoza in beeld', *De Dageraad* II/4 (1880/1881), 79-80.

<sup>50</sup> "...vermakelijke lui."; "...ze zijn een samenraapsel uit het een en uit het andere en het recept om kerkelijk-modernen te vormen of een middel om hen te ontleden, luidt: vermeng eenige deelen geloof met eenige deelen rede, roer ze goed dooreen, totdat er een soort van brei [sic] ontstaat, waarvan het boven op drijvende, dunne laagje het redelijke is en wat daarachter verborgen ligt, de eigentlijke kern is, nl. het geloovige." Quoted from: Philaethes [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], 'De modernen en de vrijdenkers', *Ibid.* II/5 (1880/1881), 95-97, there 95.

<sup>51</sup> "...de kerk is de instelling, die in welken vorm ook, altijd staat tegenover de vrije gedachte. Van den geloovigen katholiek met zijn: 'ik geloof omdat het ongerijmd is' tot den modernen hoogleeraar Opzoomer, die de erkenning dat er een God is, een onmiddellijke waarheid noemt, tot den voorganger der Vrije Gemeente te Amsterdam, die 'met zijn gansche hart' gelooft – allen staan tegenover de vrije gedachte, die de Rede wil maken tot de leidsvrouw door het leven. Allen zijn zij supranaturalisten, d.w.z. zij nemen een wereld van onzichtbare of onzienlijke dingen aan, die ligt buiten de waarneming der zinnen, der ervaring. [...] Een onredelijk geloof kan nooit opgebouwd zijn op de rede en daarom is alle moderne zoowel als orthodoxe theologie veroordeeld, niet omdat zij modern of orthodox is, maar omdat zij theologie is." Quoted from: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, 'De kerk en de vrije gedachte', *Ibid.* III/1 (1881/1882), 11-13, there 12.

<sup>52</sup> G.J.D. Mounier, 'Ingezonden stukken – Het atheïsme en de wiskunde', *De Hervorming* 1881-51 (24 December 1881), 207.

exists because his conscience told him so, and affirmed that ‘conscience’ as a human faculty exists because it is God-given. The onus of proof, Domela argued, rested with those who postulated the existence of God, but Mounier spinelessly reversed it by contending that the natural sciences are unable to prove that God does not exist. As such, modernists as Mounier subordinated reason to faith.<sup>53</sup>

Domela not only chided modernists for what he saw as their epistemological half-heartedness, he also detested their exclusive claim on ethical purity.<sup>54</sup> In an 1897 brochure, to take an example evincing that he did not tone down his critique on modernists later in life, he reinforced this by referring to an unspecified paper in which modernist opinion leader H. Oort had apparently characterised immorality as less reprehensible than unbelief.<sup>55</sup> Domela was enraged: how could Oort sincerely argue that child molesters and other evildoers deserved more respect than atheists and agnostics? Moreover, if Oort was really concerned with the spread of atheist ideas among the Dutch people, why did he just stand there in his ivory academic tower doing nothing to bring this spread to a halt?<sup>56</sup> Thus again, Domela accused modernists of being half-hearted: they lacked character and principles. He rather crossed swords with an opponent who did show his mettle and who did act out of a deep-rooted conviction worth sacrificing oneself for, an opponent such as Abraham Kuyper.<sup>57</sup>

In the same 1897 publication, Domela chided the late Rauwenhoff, another icon of modernism, for having been just as spineless as Oort. Rauwenhoff, whom Domela quoted, had once lamented that inspiring ideas were absent in political life, that the bourgeoisie did not emanate the socially salutary influence it should exert on national life, that alcoholism, a lack of domesticity and loose morals were bringing the working class to ruin, and that reading contemporary literature had a dispiriting effect.<sup>58</sup> Saying this from the socially and materially comfortable position in which Rauwenhoff had been, Domela felt, was rather dishonest: “why have we never heard that this professor said goodbye to the large house he lived in and the wealthy environment in which he dwelled, in order to go out into the world and, through the power of his principle, breathe new life [into the world]?” While preaching frugality and austerity, men such as Rauwenhoff were unwilling to give up the lives of luxury they themselves lived. While not being inspired by any principle themselves, they stigmatised those – here, Domela referred to himself – who were.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, ‘Het atheïsme en de wiskunde’, *De Dageraad* III/10 (1881-1882), 305-309.

<sup>54</sup> The ‘halfheartedness’ of modernism was a recurring theme in several of Domela’s writings. See, for example: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, ‘Halven en heelen’, *Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie en Letterkunde* XIV (1875), 249-306; F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist. Gedenkschriften* (Amsterdam [1910]), 35-37.

<sup>55</sup> Although Domela spoke about a “philippic” (“*strafrede*”) Oort had held “not very long ago” (“*niet lang geleden*”), the most probable source to which he referred is a brochure written by Oort nine years before, in 1888, titled ‘*Ongeloof erger dan onzedelijkheid*’. This untraceable brochure is mentioned in: Hooykaas, ‘Levensbericht van Henricus Oort’, 118.

<sup>56</sup> F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, *De Jezustype, of de man van overtuiging* ([Amsterdam 1897]), 12.

<sup>57</sup> [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘Gewaardeerde tegenpartijder. Brief van Domela Nieuwenhuis aan Abraham Kuyper’, reprinted in: Frieswijk, Kalma and Kuiper (eds.), *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*, 61-62; Stutje, *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*, 337. In historiography, Domela and Kuyper have been compared with each other several times. See, e.g.: H. te Velde, *Stijlen van leiderschap. Persoon en politiek van Thorbecke tot Den Uyl* (Amsterdam 2002), 55-103.

<sup>58</sup> It remains unclear to which source Domela refers here. This same source was referred to in: ‘Onze tijd’, *Ierseksche en Thoolsche Courant* 1891-290 (31 January 1891), 2. Slis’s 2003 biography on Rauwenhoff does not give any indication of a source Domela might have quoted here.

<sup>59</sup> “Maar waarom hoorden wij nooit, dat die professor het groote huis dat hij bewoonde, de rijke omgeving waarin hij verkeerde, vaarwel zeide, om uit te gaan in de wereld en daar, door de kracht van zijn beginsel, nieuw leven te wekken?” See: Domela Nieuwenhuis, *De Jezustype*, 11-12. The quote is on p. 11.

In his scoffing at Rauwenhoff, Domela implied that his criticism of modernists was not only of a spiritual, but also of a social nature. In his view, the modernist movement was all too comfortable with how social life was organised, failing to fully empathise with the working classes. Its adherents nevertheless claimed to be driven by the desire to create more social harmony, which they hoped to accomplish by advancing the spiritual development of individuals. As Domela related in his memoirs, this was exactly what he had wanted to do as well: in the 1870s, the pulpit was his podium, from which he tried to permeate church and society with Jesus's spirit in order to uplift the masses.<sup>60</sup> However, as he became more and more alienated from the liberalism that only served the interests of the "self-satisfied bourgeoisie" and dominated the "dreary" political life at the time, he found out that modernists were not the allies he had hoped them to be: they acknowledged that social life needed reform, but that was it.<sup>61</sup> They were unwilling to unanimously opt for politics that actually took working-class needs seriously, as Domela particularly noticed when he was asked to give a speech in the Free Congregation in Amsterdam. After giving this lecture, which he characterised as "socialism in a nutshell," he was never invited again: "socialism in those circles – that went too far, because the propertied element that set the tone there just as much as elsewhere would otherwise quickly leave, and where then should the money to preserve the free congregation come from?"<sup>62</sup> Once more, Domela blamed modernists for being half-hearted: they *said* they wanted social life to change, but did not *do* anything to bring such a change about.<sup>63</sup>

In the opening article of the very first issue of *Recht voor Allen*, which reads as a manifesto defending general enfranchisement, Domela implied disappointment with modernists, because they did not take the same course as he did – which they should, if they really wanted things to change. Arguing that political liberalism, the lackey of the monarchy, commerce and the church, willingly played down the cry for help welling up from within the working class, and that it had hence had its day, he approvingly cited what Opzoomer had harangued in 1873: lacking all conviction and principles, political liberalism did not have any idea of what it wanted, nor any awareness of what needed to be done in society. It had stopped developing after 1848, when J.R. Thorbecke's constitutional revision had given it its finest hour and when the difference between liberals and conservatives had been the most important issue in politics. As other political differences had become more significant, Opzoomer had concluded that the liberal position should be abandoned and that a new position should be taken up.<sup>64</sup> Domela fully agreed. However, he had become tired of waiting: Opzoomer might have said that he wanted to carry liberalism to its grave, but neither he nor anyone else had actually done so; neither he

<sup>60</sup> Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist*, 29, 31. Similar criticism was voiced in: [J.A. Fortuijn in:] 'Binnenland', *Recht voor Allen* XII.303 (25 December 1890), 2.

<sup>61</sup> "...voldane burgerij..."; "...duffe..." Quoted from: Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist*, 35-36.

<sup>62</sup> "...socialisme in een notendop..."; "Socialisme in dien kring, maar dat ging te ver, want het bezittende deel dat daar als overal den toon aangaf, zou dan spoedig verdwijnen en waar moest men dan het geld vandaan krijgen om de vrije gemeente in stand te houden?" Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>63</sup> For more examples of socialist exhortations against modernists' half-heartedness, see, e.g.: C., 'Antwoord aan den heer Wilod Versprille', *Recht voor Allen* VII.32 (24 June 1885), 2-3, there 2; [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], 'Volks?-onderwijs', *Ibid.* IX.34 (27 April 1887), 1; [J.A. Fortuijn in:] 'Binnenland', *Ibid.* XII.303 (25 December 1890), 2.

<sup>64</sup> Domela quoted: C.W. Opzoomer, *Onze achterlijkheid in de kunst der wetgeving, aangetoond vooral in die artikelen der grondwet, die aan het onderwijs gewijd zijn* (Amsterdam 1873), 71-72, incl. note 1.

nor anyone else had made actual attempts to permeate society and politics with the spirit of reform that liberalism lacked.<sup>65</sup>

Domela himself did make such an attempt. The rhetoric he used to vent his thoughts on political and social reform, and socialist discourse in general, fundamentally contrasted with the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors that went nearly unchallenged in modernist opinion until well into the 1890s and would continue to dominate modernist thinking afterwards. Concisely put, instead of maintaining that the spiritual reformation of individuals was the prerequisite for the reformation of society, Domela and socialist leaders after him contended that structural changes in the very fabric of society were a precondition for the improvement of man's quality of life. Even if they did not wholly agree with Karl Marx's (1818-1883) materialistic outlook on life, they still shared the materialistic point of view that society was not the sum of those who lived in it, but rather that man was primarily the product of his environment. In an 1880 article in *Recht voor Allen*, for example, Domela asserted that a poorly developed moral sense or a lack of piety was not what caused social wrongs – on the contrary, the cause of those wrongs was “the imperfect arrangement of society.”<sup>66</sup> Waiting for society to improve through individual reform would take too long and, even more significantly, would keep the lowest class in a state of dependency on the classes above it: after all, in order to spiritually reform themselves, low-class people needed to be ‘tutored’ by the bourgeois classes. In 1883, commenting upon a brochure issued by the modernist *Vereeniging tot verspreiding van stichtelijke blaadjes*, Domela fulminated against the preaching of such a ‘bourgeois’ discourse, of which he accused modernists:

be docile and work, do as you are told with diligence and delight, resign yourself to your fate, in order to live as satisfied and happily as possible. Everyone should stay in the circle in which he is placed. [...] [No,] the eyes of the people should be opened; they should see how injustice takes place, how it is not rooted in nature, but a result of human creations and laws that the horses that deserve the oats do not get it. [...] Reasonable people cannot be satisfied with present-day social relations.<sup>67</sup>

Structural changes to emancipate the low classes, Domela argued, were needed, and they were needed *now*.

Domela's dissatisfaction with the existing organisation of society occasionally filled him with an outright revolutionary spirit. A pre-eminent example thereof is a lecture Domela gave in the Frisian village of Sint Annaparochie on 24 November 1889, of all places in an old church building still owned by the local Dutch Reformed congregation.<sup>68</sup> Approximately 1,500

<sup>65</sup> [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘L.S.’, *Recht voor Allen* I.1 (1 March 1879), 1.

<sup>66</sup> “...de gebrekkige regeling der maatschappij...” Quoted from: [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘Zedebederf’, *Ibid.* II.36 (6 November 1880), 1. Another pre-eminent example is: [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘Wat willen de socialisten?’, *Ibid.* VI.1 (1 March 1884), 1-2.

<sup>67</sup> “...weest gedwee en werkt, doet wat u opgedragen wordt met ijver en lust, schikt u zoo goed mogelijk in uw lot, om zoo tevreden en gelukkig te leven. Ieder moet blijven in den kring waarin hij geplaatst is. [...] [Nee,] het wordt hoogtijd, [...] om de oogen te openen [van het volk] voor de werkelijkheid, om ze te doen zien, hoe er onrecht geschiedt, hoe het niet in de natuur ligt, maar geworden is door menschelijke instellingen en wetten, dat de paarden die den haver verdienen, hem niet krijgen. [...] Welnu, denkende menschen kunnen geen vrede hebben met de hedendaagsche verhoudingen.” Quoted from: [F. Domela Nieuwenhuis], ‘Alweer die berusting!’, *Ibid.* V.10 (5 May 1883), 1.

<sup>68</sup> Domela had received permission to lecture in this church building from the majority of members of the local Dutch Reformed congregation. One of them, Johannes Kuiken (1860-1938), explicitly made himself known as a political socialist, sympathising with Domela. See: J. Kuiken, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1889-11 (16 March 1889), 43-44; [J. Kuiken in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De socialisten te St. Anna Parochie’,



attendants heard Domela giving a speech on ‘the French Revolution of 1789 in comparison with the present day’. Domela would later compare the scene in Sint Annaparochie during that Sunday in November 1889 to sixteenth-century ‘field meetings’, religious services the first generation of Protestants had held in the open air during the first decades of the Reformation era.<sup>69</sup> In the lecture itself, he made another comparison. In 1789, the group of republican secularists who would quickly rise to power in post-Revolutionary France had held its first meetings in a place of worship in the *Rue Saint-Jacques* in Paris, from which it had taken its name: the ‘Jacobin Club’. Now, a group of people who were just as dissatisfied with the existing social order as the Jacobins had been one hundred years before, were gathered in a place of worship as well. As Domela lectured, the French Revolution had been the beginning of a process in which the third estate – the bourgeoisie – struggled out from under the power of the first and second estates, the clergy and the nobility. Blue-collar workers had helped the bourgeoisie to achieve this. However, the result of this process was that the bourgeoisie had simply come to replace the clergy and nobility as an all-powerful closed caste, unwilling to give the labouring masses the right of self-determination. According to Domela, the cause of social misery was to be found in this: the working class had no access to political power. To a certain extent, the bourgeoisie recognised the destitution of the working classes, but the means with which it tried to mitigate social misery, such as the establishment of people’s savings banks and soup kitchens – initiatives finding great support in modernist circles – did not truly help the masses develop; these means merely maintained the dominion of the bourgeoisie. Therefore, a socialist revolution was needed as a fulfilment of the ideals written on the banner of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. Domela ended his lecture with an exhortation that, as the controversy following his appearance in Sint Annaparochie showed, was interpreted as a call for immediate revolt: labourers had to join forces to combat moneyed interests.<sup>70</sup>

The gradual rise of the *Sociaal-Democratische Bond* (Social Democratic League or SDB) that Domela had founded in 1881 came to an end in the 1890s. The seat in the Dutch Second Chamber that Domela had obtained in 1888 was lost during the parliamentary elections three years later. The agitation of the SDB for universal suffrage did not produce the desired result; on the contrary, it only triggered the government to increase its repressive measures against the SDB.<sup>71</sup> In addition, Domela became more and more alienated from German socialism, on which his SDB had oriented itself from its founding onwards. Socialists in Germany, Domela came to recognise in the early 1890s, lacked a revolutionary spirit by placing their hopes too much on parliamentarianism, and were shown to possess the same ‘detrimental’ feature as all Germans: a particular fondness of discipline, authority and conservatism.<sup>72</sup> Domela was not the only Dutch

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*Ibid.* 1889-12 (23 March 1889), 46-47, there 47; J. Kuiken, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1889-15 (13 April 1889), 59-60; J. Kuiken, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1891-24 (13 June 1891), 98; J. Kuiken, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1891-32 (8 August 1891), 129-130.

<sup>69</sup> Similar ‘field meetings’ had in the Netherlands also been held in 1834 and subsequent years by those members of the Dutch Reformed Church who went along with the *Afscheiding*.

<sup>70</sup> ‘Binnenland – Voordracht-Domela Nieuwenhuis’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXII.19016 (26 November 1889), 1; Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist*, 404-406. During a meeting of the Dutch Reformed synod on 31 July 1890, Domela was accused of having violated the civil order and having expressed anti-Christian opinions. See: *Handelingen NHK 1890*, 154-162.

<sup>71</sup> M.H.J. Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd in de SDAP. Het ontstaan van de Sociaal-Democratische Partij in Nederland (SDP)* (Amsterdam 1989), 21-22.

<sup>72</sup> Stutje, *Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis*, 208-209.

socialist to develop a growing dislike of the 'bourgeois' parliamentary system. As a result, tensions erupted in the SDB.<sup>73</sup> In Friesland, the Social Democratic League took part in elections in a political cartel, called '*Friesche Volkspartij*' ('Frisian People's Party'), with progressive liberals. Socialists outside of Friesland feared that this collaboration would contaminate their movement with 'bourgeois' influences, forcing their Frisian fellow partisans to leave the provincial cartel.<sup>74</sup> When a majority at the SDB congress in 1893 decided not to take part in the parliamentary elections of 1894, and the SDB was in danger of being forbidden due to its willingness to establish a socialist state by force instead of exclusively by politics, a schism between the radical, revolutionary wing and the moderate, parliamentary wing was inevitable. The radical wing, renaming itself '*Socialistenbond*' ('League of Socialists') after the actual judicial dismantlement of the SDB in late 1894, was led by Domela Nieuwenhuis, who, accompanied by a significant number of supporters, radicalised in his anarchist leanings and left party politics altogether in 1898.<sup>75</sup> Domela would continue to raise his voice in public debate, but his anarchist stance caused him to lose his leading position in the organised labour movement. The role of flag-bearers of Dutch socialism was taken over by men as Frank van der Goes (1859-1939) and, particularly, Pieter Jelles Troelstra (1860-1930).<sup>76</sup> They were the leaders of the Social Democratic Workers' Party, founded in 1894 by what had previously been the SDB's moderate wing and joined in 1900 by the remnant of the *Socialistenbond*.

Contrary to the SDB and the *Socialistenbond*, the SDAP took a less condemnatory stand against religion. In practice, a distinction was made between organised religion and religious faith as such. The institution of the church should be attacked insofar as it thwarted the realisation of structural social reforms. It was part of and supported the existing social order, but this social order itself had to be overturned, not merely its cornerstones. If the SDAP would officially incorporate atheism into its party doctrine, it would drive a wedge between religious and irreligious labourers and hence distract them from joining forces to defend their shared economic and political interests. This course was not only a matter of principle: behind it was the insight that religion would not soon disappear as a powerful force in society. Religious faith should therefore be dealt with pragmatically: it was neither encouraged nor denounced.<sup>77</sup> Motivated by the desire to broaden its electoral basis in order to gain power through parliamentary channels, and respecting the freedom of conscience, the SDAP congress took the decision in 1902 not to oppose the equal treatment of public and private schools, one of the political spearheads of orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics.<sup>78</sup> Moreover, when socialist freethinker J.A. Fortuijn (1855-1940) urged the SDAP to explicitly present itself as an *anti*-religious party, the congress of 1907 reaffirmed that

<sup>73</sup> J.H.A. van der Velden, *Van SDB tot SP. 125 jaar socialisme in Nederland* (Amsterdam 2008), 40-43.

<sup>74</sup> Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd*, 22-23.

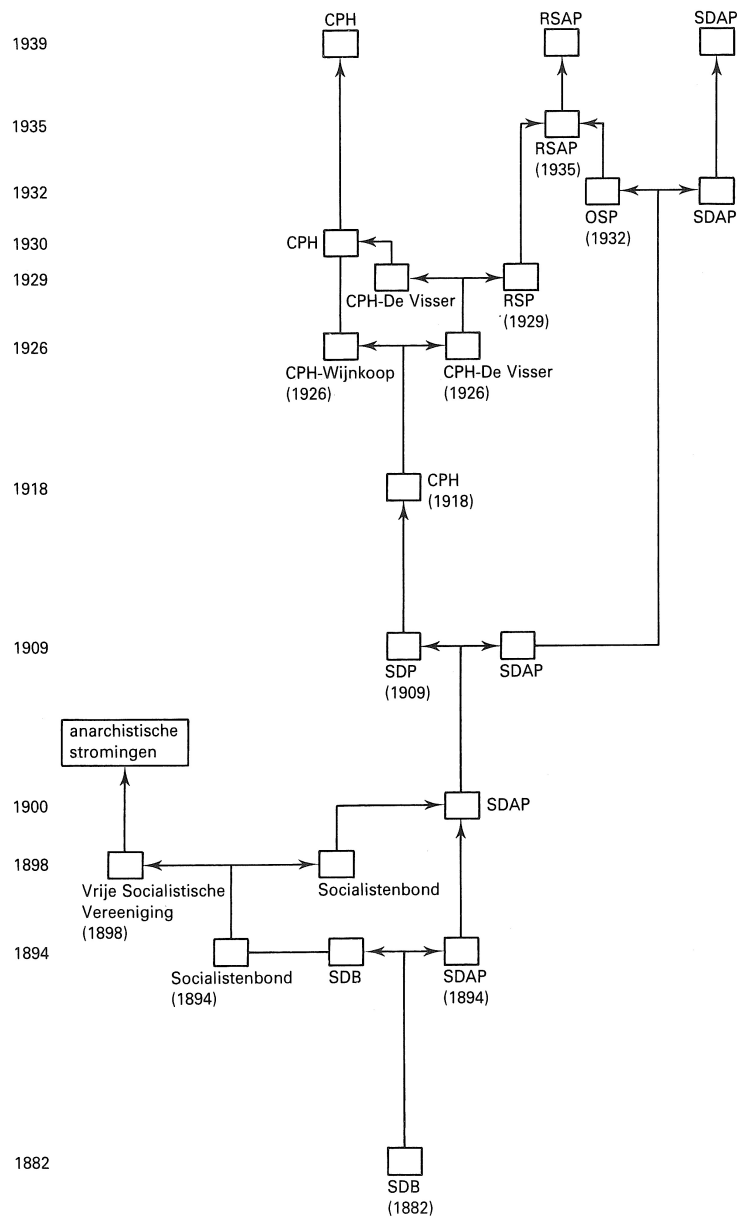
<sup>75</sup> Domela described his development as a modernist minister into a socialist, and finally into an anarchist, in: Domela Nieuwenhuis, *Van christen tot anarchist*. See also: De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme* I, 91-94.

<sup>76</sup> According to De Vos, the position Troelstra had within the SDAP was similar to the position Domela Nieuwenhuis had had in the early organised labour movement. See: *Ibid.*, 117-119.

<sup>77</sup> Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd*, 121-122; H. Noordegraaf, 'Doorbraak toen en nu. Zestig jaar Partij van de Arbeid', *Socialisme en Democratie* LXIII.1-2 (2006), 9-15, there 10.

<sup>78</sup> Buiting, *Richtingen- en partijstrijd*, 120-154; W.H. Vliegen, *Die onze kracht ontwakende deed. Geschiedenis der Sociaal-Democratische Arbeiderspartij in Nederland gedurende de eerste 25 jaren van haar bestaan* I (Amsterdam [1924]), 443-480. K. Geertsma, *De vrijheid van schoolrichting en de S.D.A.P.* (Arnhem 1931); A.P.E. Korver, 'De Groninger schoolmotie van de SDAP', in: M. Krop et al. (eds.), *Jaarboek voor het Democratisch Socialisme* VIII (1987), 15-54.

religious ideas.<sup>80</sup>



## Socialist and communist parties in the Netherlands before the Second World War.

Source: I. Lipschits, *Politieke stromingen in Nederland*.

*Inleiding tot de geschiedenis van de Nederlandse politieke partijen* (Deventer [1977] 1982), 18.

sentiments, but strongly disliked religion himself.<sup>81</sup> The modernist movement, he argued, had

<sup>79</sup> H.G. Leih, *Kaart van politiek Nederland* (Kampen 1962), 60.

<sup>80</sup> Nor did most SDAP members. See: De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme* I, 125.

<sup>81</sup> R.L. Blom, *Frank van der Goes, 1859-1939. Journalist, literator en pionier van het socialisme* (Delft 2012), 190, 327.

some particular ‘flaws’. These same ‘flaws’ were imputed to modernists by many contemporary intellectuals, most expressively by the circle of belletrists in which Van der Goes had moved prior to his political career, and are therefore addressed in the next chapter. Troelstra, on the other hand, although not belonging to any church and calling himself ‘irreligious’, acknowledged that Christianity and religion in general did not necessarily have to be ‘opium of the people’.<sup>82</sup> Being raised by a freethinking father and a modernist mother, he even developed an interest in occultism and participated in Spiritist séances. Troelstra shared this brief turn towards Spiritism with other Dutch intellectuals in the *fin-de-siècle* era.<sup>83</sup> Most of these intellectuals identified themselves, just as Troelstra, as ‘socialist’, which did not mean that all of them attached the same meaning to this term as Troelstra. As discussed in chapter 5, De Rooy explains this phenomenon by suggesting that Spiritism and socialism were part of a larger ‘idealistic-humanitarian movement’, which on an abstract level aspired after the same goal as the modernist movement: giving meaning to life and reforming society in a new, ‘modern’ way. The relationship between the two movements was nonetheless complicated, and crossovers only went in one direction. A minority of modernists, who are dealt with in the next section, combined their faith with socialism. A tinier minority of modernists blended their faith with occultism. An even tinier number of modernists interspersed their liberal Protestant persuasion with both occultism and socialism.<sup>84</sup> In turn, non-modernist occultists, socialists and occultist socialists did not mingle liberal Protestant elements in their philosophy of life. Troelstra, for one, never showed any affection for the modernist movement. Although he never ventured an opinion on modernism in particular, he implied in his memoirs how he thought about it.

Looking back upon his youth and adolescence, Troelstra stated that religion had been absent in his parental home. This did not prevent him, however, from deeply reflecting on spiritual affairs.<sup>85</sup> After years of inward struggle, he came to the conclusion that the existence of God was pure speculation and that he did not need a deity or supreme power to have an all-dominating ideal in life and feel connected to the eternal cosmos.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, he respected others’ religious feelings as manifestations of a heartfelt desire to give life meaning. What Troelstra did not appreciate, which he exemplified by quoting a lecture he had given in 1879, were attempts to either deny spiritual needs altogether or to rationalise these needs. Concerning these latter attempts, he deemed that:

For individuals who are conscious of themselves and of the spirit of the age, Christianity is out-of-date, and instead of transforming and diluting it as one pleases, it should best be kept as it is [and] kept where it belongs: among infants and among all who blindly believe.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>82</sup> P.J. Hagen, *Politicus uit hartstocht. Biografie van Pieter Jelles Troelstra* (Amsterdam 2010), 218-219, 342-344.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 336-339. See also: D. Jansen, ‘Op zoek naar spiritistische elementen in de gedenkschriften van Troelstra’, *It Beaken* LVII (1995), 61-79; J. Wulterkens, ‘Geloof in daden. Het spiritisme van P.J. Troelstra’, *Onvoltooid Verleden* XV (2002), 39-47; A. Holtrop, *Nynke van Hichtum. Leven en wereld van Sjoukje Troelstra-Bokma de Boer, 1860-1939* (Amsterdam 2005), 267-277.

<sup>84</sup> L.A. Bähler is the most well-known modernist to fit the last category. An example of a modernist who combined his faith with occultism, in his case Spiritism, but not with socialism was C. Hille Ris Lambers. Politically, Hille Ris Lambers was a liberal. See: Klooster, ‘Dr. Cornelis Hille Ris Lambers’, 66.

<sup>85</sup> P.J. Troelstra, *Gedenkschriften I. Wording* (Amsterdam 1927), 135-136.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 263-264.

<sup>87</sup> “Voor zichzelf en de richting des tijds bewuste lieden is het Christendom verouderd en in plaats van het naar elks believen te vervormen en te verwateren, deed men het beter onvervalscht te laten, waar het behoort: onder de kinderen en allen, die gelooven zonder te zien.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 165.

This sentence can hardly be interpreted other than as a disapproval of modernism: after all, modernists wanted to transform and ‘dilute’ or take the dogmatic edges off Christianity by trying to reconcile it with contemporary developments in theology, science and culture. Troelstra implied that his view on Christianity had not essentially changed later in his life.<sup>88</sup>

How religion and the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century socialist movement related to each other was more complex than this section can discuss. Socialist discourse contained anti-Christian phraseology, but was at the same time full of Christian terminology and conveyed, just as Christianity, a teleological message of deliverance from misery.<sup>89</sup> Domela Nieuwenhuis was worshipped by his Frisian following as ‘*us verlosser*’ (‘our redeemer’). The twelve founders of the SDAP, among them Van der Goes and Troelstra, were colloquially referred to as the ‘twelve apostles’ in socialist history. Saying that the early organised labour movement was suffused with an anti-religious or at best irreligious spirit is hence only true if it is intended to say that ecclesial Christianity was, to put it mildly, not looked upon very favourably. In fact, socialism itself bore the resemblance of a new religion and was professed with religious intensity.

The issue at stake in this section is the following. Having resigned as a modernist minister, Domela Nieuwenhuis began to spread a socialist gospel with religious zeal and repeatedly lashed out at the ‘bourgeois’, ‘socially conservative’ and ‘self-satisfied’ modernist movement. Because he was the first real socialist leader in the Netherlands, his influence on the early labour movement was immense.<sup>90</sup> Due to his interlarding of anti-modernist taunts within socialist discourse, blue-collar workers with socialist sympathies were constantly presented with a negative image of the modernist movement. Later socialist leaders did not rectify this image. They rather kept totally silent about religion, in order not to alienate Catholic, Protestant and Jewish labourers from political socialism.<sup>91</sup>

#### 4. Views on Socialism in the Modernist Movement

When the labour movement emerged in the Netherlands in the 1870s, and particularly when it began to manifest itself as ‘socialism’ in the sphere of politics in the 1880s, responses to it in modernist circles were, on the whole, not very favourable. As of the late 1870s, modernist criticism of socialism was first and foremost directed against Domela Nieuwenhuis – which could hardly be surprising, considering his anti-modernist statements analysed above. Moreover, it was directed against Domela’s ally Krijthe, who created controversy in the NPB by stating not

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<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>89</sup> Van der Goes, for example, actually called socialism ‘a new faith’. See: Blom, *Frank van der Goes*, 169.

<sup>90</sup> De Vos states that the word ‘leader’ is far too weak to characterise the position Domela Nieuwenhuis had in the early socialist movement; he had the status of a messiah. See: De Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme* I, 78-80.

<sup>91</sup> This only applies to the pre-Second World War socialist movement. See: F. Becker, ‘Een strijd om nieuwe verhoudingen. Sociaaldemocraten en christendemocraten in de Nederlandse politiek na 1945’, in: Van Dam, Kennedy and Wielenga (eds.), *Achter de zuilen*, 301-331, there 301-310. If communism is included in the labour movement, the picture changes. In the official magazine of the Communist Party of the Netherlands (*Communistische Partij van Nederland* or CPN), which had come into being after a schism in the SDAP in 1909, religion was vehemently satirised. A climax was reached in the early 1930s, when the government decided to penalise ‘scornful blasphemy’ in direct response to the publication of a series of anti-religious articles and cartoons in *De Tribune*, the magazine of the CPN. See: J. de Ruiter, ‘Drie maal godslastering in het parlement’, in: C.C. van Baalen et al. (eds.), *God in de Nederlandse politiek* (Nijmegen and The Hague 2005), 40-49, there 40-43. In the course of the 1930s, however, the CPN dropped its sarcastic mockery of religion in an attempt to make a united front with religious antifascists against National Socialism. See: A.A. de Jonge, *Het communisme in Nederland. De geschiedenis van een politieke partij* (The Hague 1972), 64.

to believe in a God who is ‘conscious of himself’, and by repeatedly contrasting the hoped-for blessings of social democracy with the social indifference that he perceived in the modernist movement.<sup>92</sup> Modernist criticism was essentially threefold. First, the way in which socialism was propagated was deemed too ‘vulgar’, too ‘unethical’. Instead of speaking in a cultured manner, trying to enhance the working class’s level of civilisation, socialist leaders intended to mobilise the masses by using what modernist commentators saw as ‘inflammatory’ or ‘rabble-rousing’ rhetoric.<sup>93</sup> Socialist opinion leaders set people against each other with their preaching of a class struggle, whereas, as expressed in the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors, the general feeling in the modernist movement was that more social interaction between classes was needed.<sup>94</sup> Second, socialism was generally regarded as too anti-religious in modernist circles. Socialist opinion leaders were accused either of ‘unfoundedly’ keeping Christianity responsible for all social misery, a claim that they enforced by stimulating people to leave the church and to renounce religious faith altogether, or of ‘unsubstantially’ claiming that the true ‘spirit of Jesus’ was the same spirit with which the socialist movement was suffused.<sup>95</sup> Third, the complaint could be heard in the modernist movement that socialism as a social theory failed to appreciate the *waarde der persoonlijkheid*, the value of the individual personality. It only looked at society in terms of ‘masses’ in which individuality did not count. It wanted to turn the state into a Moloch that would make private social enterprise unnecessary, which would, modernist critics objected, discourage both the moneyed classes from taking responsibility for setting up social welfare schemes and the poor from taking responsibility for their own lives. Moreover, by merely changing the organisation of social life, socialism would only treat the symptoms of social misery, but it would not eradicate social misery root and branch. It might improve the situation of low-class people materially, but it would not reform their inner selves.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>92</sup> As explained in note 44 in chapter 3.

<sup>93</sup> Domela’s, as well as Kuyper’s, rhetorical style has been characterised as ‘populist’. See: K.P.S.S. Vossen, ‘Van marginaal naar mainstream? Populisme in de Nederlandse geschiedenis’, *BMGN CXXVII.2* (2012), 28-54, there 29.

<sup>94</sup> E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Hoe “Recht voor Allen” zich verdedigt’, *De Hervorming* 1883-31 (4 August 1883), 122-123; [J.C. van Marken in:], ‘Binnenland – De heer Van Marken en de sociaal-democraten’, *Ibid.* 1886-10 (6 March 1886), 39; J.T. Tenthoff, ‘Goed sociaal’, *Ibid.* 1886-12 (20 March 1886), 45-46, there 46; Een leek, ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Van huishoudelijken aard’, *Ibid.* 1886-18 (1 May 1886), 70; H. Oort, ‘Ons standpunt en onze taak’, *Ibid.* 1888-44 (3 November 1888), 173-174, there 173; B.B., ‘Onze taak’, *Ibid.* 1888-47 (24 November 1888), 185; B. Tideman Jz., ‘In den winter’, *Ibid.* 1889-09 (2 March 1889), 33; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De socialisten te St. Anna Parochie’, *Ibid.* 1889-12 (23 March 1889), 46-47, there 47; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Over Christendom en socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1889-14 (6 April 1889), 54-55, there 55; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Tenthoff’s lezing’, *Ibid.* 1890-48 (29 November 1890), 191; F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘Brieven van een Amerikaansch student’, *Ibid.* 1891-21 (23 May 1891), 83-84, there 84; D.C. de Haas, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1891-25 (20 June 1891), 101-102; ‘Het socialisme – een godsdienst?’, *De Protestant* III.36 (5 September 1885), 2-3, there 3.

<sup>95</sup> E.g.: [J.W. van der Linden in:], ‘Binnenland – De veertiende vergadering van moderne theologen op 22 en 23 April 1879’, *De Hervorming* 1879-21 (24 May 1879), 82; [J.W. van der Linden], ‘Referaat van den heer J.W. van der Linden’, *Ibid.* 1879-36 (6 September 1879), 142; 1879-37 (13 September 1879), 145-146; Vulkanus, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Socialisme en godsdienst’, *Ibid.* 1882-50 (16 December 1882), 200; P. van der Veen, ‘Onze leestafel – “Socialistische logica”’, *Ibid.* 1883-08 (24 February 1883), 31-32; 1883-11 (17 March 1883), 43-44; 1883-12 (24 March 1883), 48; ‘Buitenland – Een vrijdenker in Frankrijk over het socialisme van ’t oorspronkelijk Christendom’, *Ibid.* 1884-21 (24 May 1884), 84-85; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1884-30 (26 July 1884), 22; W. Haverkamp, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De kerkvaders en de socialisten’, *Ibid.* 1885-14 (4 April 1885), 56; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Over Christendom en socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1889-13 (30 March 1889), 51; D.C. de Haas, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1891-25 (20 June 1891), 101-102; J. van Loon, ‘Orde of tuchtelooheid?’, *Ibid.* 1891-31 (1 August 1891), 124; ‘De socialisten’, *De Protestant* IV.29 (17 July 1886), 2-3.

<sup>96</sup> E.g.: ‘Onze leestafel – “Aanleiding tot huiselijke en maatschappelijke welvaart”’, *De Hervorming* 1878-42 (19 October 1878), 3; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Uit de Tweede Kamer’, *Ibid.* 1878-50 (14 December

For these reasons, the early socialist movement was ill-reputed in modernist circles – that is to say, socialism as a *political* ideology and system. In the modernist movement in general, the abominable living and working conditions with which working-class families were laden, sharply exposed by socialists, were recognised, and the necessity of social reform was felt, although a tiny minority dared to question whether working-class conditions were really as miserable as Domela and his fellow socialists claimed they were.<sup>97</sup> From the mid-1880s onwards, some modernists came to look beyond the anti-modernist parlance with which Domela defended the cause of socialism and began to publicly acknowledge that the socialist movement as such, notwithstanding the ‘wrong’ way in which it manifested itself and the ‘wrong’ solutions it put forward, was founded on an ‘ethical principle’, a sincere pursuit of social justice, of a better world.<sup>98</sup> Next to that, some modernists came to appreciate the *gemeenschapsgedachte* (idea of solidarity) implied in socialism. Being disappointed in the mere economical focus of political liberalism, they asserted that respecting the value of the individual personality did not have to be the same as the philosophy of individualism defended by contemporary political liberalism. Moreover, those modernists began to argue that ‘socialism’ was not synonymous with the kind of politics Domela Nieuwenhuis and Krijthe championed.<sup>99</sup> For them, the word ‘socialism’ came to have a positive connotation and came to stand for a hoped-for reformation of cultural and social life, leading to a new cultural climate in which all individuals, no longer engaged in a struggle for survival, would have the opportunity to improve their mind, to broaden their horizon and to develop their spiritual life, and in which class tensions would no longer threaten society with disruption.

Two of the most prominent modernists who came to use ‘socialism’ in such a ‘socio-cultural’ sense in the late 1880s were J.T. Tenthoff and J. van Loenen Martinet. Their dissatisfaction with the, in their view, lack of social reform-mindedness in politically liberal

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1878), 2; [J.W. van der Linden], ‘Referaat van den heer J.W. van der Linden’, *Ibid.* 1879-37 (13 September 1879), 145-146, there 146; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Redding uit den maatschappelijke nood’, *Ibid.* 1884-06 (9 February 1884), 24; W. Zaalberg, ‘Van binnen uit’, *Ibid.* 1884-19 (10 May 1884), 75-76; W. Zaalberg, ‘Bij brood alleen niet’, *Ibid.* 1885-01 (3 January 1885), 2-3; W. Zaalberg, ‘Christendom en socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1885-08 (21 February 1885), 29-30; J.T. Tenthoff, ‘Goed sociaal’, *Ibid.* 1886-12 (20 March 1886), 45-46; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Over Christendom en socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1889-14 (6 April 1889), 54-55; B. Tideman Jz., ‘Een werkmans-profeet’, *Ibid.* 1890-13 (29 March 1890), 49-50; H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1891-25 (20 June 1891), 102; E. Snellen, ‘De moderne richting en het maatschappelijk vraagstuk’, *Ibid.* 1891-50 (12 December 1891), 199-200; ‘De socialisten’, *De Protestant* IV.30 (24 July 1886), 3-4.

<sup>97</sup> E.g.: P. van der Veen, ‘Onze leestafel – “Socialistische logica”’, *De Hervorming* 1883-10 (10 March 1883), 39-40; [S. in:] ‘Feiten uit het sociale leven van den tegenwoordigen tijd’, *Ibid.* 1890-50 (13 December 1890), 199.

<sup>98</sup> E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – De belangstelling in het socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1885-07 (14 February 1885), 26; J.T. Tenthoff, ‘Goed sociaal’, *Ibid.* 1886-13 (27 March 1886), 49-50, there 49; J.H. Maronier, ‘Het Heilsleger’, *Ibid.* 1890-49 (6 December 1890), 193-194, there 194; [P. van der Veen in:] ‘Binnenland – Vergadering van moderne theologen’, *Ibid.* 1891-13 (28 March 1891), 51; W. Meijer, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1891-18 (2 May 1891), 71-72; [F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen], ‘Christelijk socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1893-32 (12 August 1893), 126; J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Aan den heer W. Zaalberg’, *Ibid.* 1893-32 (12 August 1893), 126. Meyboom recognised this ethical principle, but was against state socialism: socialism, being the pursuit of well-being for all, should be the result of a change of mentality in society. Only then would socialism truly have an ethical meaning. See: Meyboom, *Socialisme*; L. Buning, ‘Dr. Hajo Uden Meybooms Asser pastoraat. Flitsen uit de kerkelijke geschiedenis van de ‘Stad der Pallaizen’ tussen 1879 en 1892’, *Nieuwe Drentse Volksalmanak* LXXXII (1964), 58-83, there 79.

<sup>99</sup> E.g.: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Redding uit den maatschappelijke nood’, *De Hervorming* 1884-10 (8 March 1884), 39-40, there 39; F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen, ‘Geen philanthropie alléén’, *Ibid.* 1893-16 (22 April 1893), 62; [F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen], ‘Gemeenschapszin’, *Ibid.* 1893-23 (10 June 1893), 90-91; J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Aan den heer W. Zaalberg’, *Ibid.* 1893-31 (5 August 1893), 122; [F.P.J. Sibmacher Zijnen], ‘Christelijk socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1893-32 (12 August 1893), 126.

circles was shared by so-called ‘social’ or ‘progressive’ liberals, who emerged as a separate group within liberalism in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. H. Goeman Borgesius was one of them. More than ‘classical’, ‘orthodox’ or ‘old-school’ liberals, social liberals, though not rejecting the capitalist structure of the economy and society as such, felt that private enterprise was not enough to combat the pauperisation of the working class; it was the duty of the state to ‘correct’ the negative social effects of capitalism. For them, liberty was not only a ‘negative’ concept, in the sense that government interference in socio-economic life was essentially an infringement of an individual’s liberty and should therefore be reduced to an absolute minimum, but also a ‘positive’ one, in the sense that the state should ensure that all individuals have the opportunity for self-improvement. There was no consensus among progressive liberals regarding the question of *how* the state should realise this. Simply put: at the one end of the progressive liberal spectre, there were people who urged the state to take ‘corrective measures’ *after* the economic process, who wanted the government to proactively set up, stimulate or facilitate social welfare schemes as *toynbeewerk*, while at the other end of the spectre, there were people who urged the state to intervene in the economic process itself, who thus wanted to build ‘corrective measures’ in the form of social legislation *within* the capitalist system. Those who went furthest in their acceptance of government intervention in socio-economic life were somewhat pejoratively referred to as ‘*kathedersocialisten*’ (‘socialists of the chair’).<sup>100</sup> Tenthoff and Van Loenen Martinet differed from other progressive liberals, because ‘socialism’ did not have a negative connotation for them – on the contrary.

Addressing the question of which attitude the modernist movement should adopt towards the labour movement at the meeting of modern theologians in 1885, Tenthoff gave the answer that this attitude “ought not to be one of hostility to [the labour movement], but should be one stimulating what is good in [it].” The despicable tone sung in *Recht voor Allen* ought not to obfuscate that the labour movement was driven by a legitimate aversion for the subordination of labour to capital.<sup>101</sup> In a lecture held a year later, at a meeting of modern ministers in the northern provinces, he put the labour movement in an even more favourable light by arguing that its ‘*grondtrek*’ (‘main feature’) was not a political, but an ‘ethical’ one. Again urging his fellow modernist ministers not to base their judgement of the labour movement on the anti-religious, demagogic rhetoric of its then leaders, Tenthoff lectured that the labour movement had characteristics modernist ministers should praise and pick up themselves: it was an outcry against the lack of solidarity in society, it disagreed with (political) power being the prerogative of the propertied classes, it looked at social wrongs rationally instead of as ineradicable quirks of fate, and it attempted to make the working class more self-reliant, both socially and

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<sup>100</sup> For the emergence of social or progressive liberalism in the Netherlands, see: G. Taal, *Liberalen en radicalen in Nederland, 1872-1901* (The Hague 1980); S.P. Dudink, *Deugdzaam liberalisme. Sociaal-liberalisme in Nederland, 1870-1901* (Amsterdam 1997); F. de Beaufort and P.G.C. van Schie, *Sociaal-liberalisme* (Amsterdam 2014), 39-56, 112-127.

<sup>101</sup> “...mag deze houding geen vijandige tegenover, maar moet zij eene het goede bevorderende naast haar zijn.” This lecture, including the discussion it gave rise to, was integrally published in: *Bijblad van De Hervorming* 1885-04 (30 May 1885), 49-64. The quote is on p. 53. J.J. Kalma erroneously states that Tenthoff gave this lecture at a meeting of modern ministers in the *northern* provinces instead of at the *national* meeting of modern theologians annually held in Amsterdam. See: J.J. Kalma, *Er valt voor recht te strijden. De roerige dagen rond 1890 in Friesland* (Zoetermeer 1978), 165.



intellectually.<sup>102</sup> After 1886, Tenthoff came to fully embrace the word ‘socialism’ in reference to his ideal organisation of society. He implied this in a lecture given in the department of the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* in the North Holland town of Edam in 1890. Tenthoff somewhat cryptically began this lecture by applying Luke 2:34-35 to the emergence of socialism. According to this Gospel excerpt, an old man named Simeon had prophesied, although in less explicit words, that Jesus would force people to declare themselves either against or in favour of the ideal – the ideal of the kingdom of God – that Jesus would preach later in life. Socialism, Tenthoff suggested, now forced people to declare themselves either against or in favour of an ideal as well. By applying Simeon’s words to socialism, he thus suggested that the ideal of the kingdom of God equalled the socialist ideal. Condemning the strong bourgeois bias against ‘socialism’, he enthusiastically expounded in his lecture what this ideal was: collectivisation of property in order to achieve social justice.<sup>103</sup> Many attendants interpreted Tenthoff’s lecture as outright politically socialist, social-democratic propaganda. The board of the local department of the *Nut* and the mayor of Edam therefore felt the urge to strongly denounce its content, being of the opinion that it imperilled social happiness.<sup>104</sup>

In the controversy following the Edam lecture, Van Loenen Martinet took up the cudgels for Tenthoff.<sup>105</sup> This was no surprise, as he had come to approach the socialist movement himself as well. As editor-in-chief of the principal modernist weekly in the Netherlands, he had an influential position in Dutch modernist opinion. Based on his extensive, socialist-minded coverage of social affairs, it might seem as if socialism in a political sense was widely accepted in the modernist movement around 1890. Yet the opposite was true. As already told in chapter 2, modernist dissatisfaction with the anti-ecclesial and socialist-friendly way in which Van Loenen Martinet edited *De Hervorming* reached a first peak in 1887, when the general NPB meeting decided to change the subtitle of the magazine, thereby emphasising that the editor-in-chief’s opinions did not express official NPB policy. However, Van Loenen Martinet persisted in applauding socialist views he could endorse. Generating, in his own account, much disapproval, he gave a lecture during the second Dutch celebration of Labour Day on 1 May 1891, in which

<sup>102</sup> [J.T. Tenthoff in:] ‘Verslag der vergadering van moderne pred. in de noordelijke provinciën, gehouden te Leeuwarden den 9 Juli’, *De Hervorming* 1886-31 (31 July 1886), 124-125, there 124. Nineteen weeks before, Tenthoff had already published an article in *De Hervorming* in which he urged his fellow modernists not to equate socialism with social democracy and not to be fooled by socialist rhetoric. That socialist leaders preached revolution did not mean that socialism as such was condemnable. See: J.T. Tenthoff, ‘Goed sociaal’, *Ibid.* 1886-12 (20 March 1886), 45-46, there 46.

<sup>103</sup> J.T. Tenthoff, *Het socialisme. Lezing gehouden te Edam* (Hoorn 1890). Some attendants of the lecture complained that Tenthoff’s lecture and his brochure did not have identical content. They moreover stated to be most appalled by some remarks Tenthoff had made during the discussion following his lecture, remarks that were not included in the brochure. See: H.J. Calkoen, ‘Ingezonden – De voordracht-Tenthoff te Edam’, *Sociaal Weekblad* V.3 (17 January 1891), 31-32; H.J. Calkoen, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Voordracht Tenthoff te Edam’, *De Hervorming* 1891-03 (17 January 1891), 12; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Nogmaals de Edammer Nuts-beweging’, *Ibid.* 1891-05 (31 January 1891), 19.

<sup>104</sup> ‘Allerlei’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LXIII.19315 (11 November 1890), 2; H.J. Calkoen, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Voordracht Tenthoff te Edam’, *De Hervorming* 1891-03 (17 January 1891), 12.

<sup>105</sup> Van Loenen Martinet thought that the reactions to Tenthoff’s lecture were exaggerated and stated that branches of the Society for Public Advancement should not refrain from inviting men as Tenthoff into their midst, as the ideals implied in socialism deserved to be heard by all. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Tenthoff’s lezing’, *Ibid.* 1890-48 (29 November 1890), 191; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De Edammer Nutsbeweging’, *Ibid.* 1891-01 (3 January 1891), 3.

he applauded the socialist idea of an eight-hour working day.<sup>106</sup> Shortly thereafter, he implied that he felt most political sympathy for those who were willing to give the labour movement its due, and blamed political liberals for their unwillingness to recognise what was right in the demands that leaders of the labour movement made.<sup>107</sup>

Modernist indignation over his political views now reached a second, more vehement peak. In a series of 1892 articles, Van Loenen Martinet favourably discussed the idea of American political economist Henry George (1839-1897) to nationalise all soil, meaning to judicially prohibit private landownership.<sup>108</sup> Even in the most progressively liberal circles, this idea, put forward by political socialists, hardly found approval.<sup>109</sup> Feeling that this series of articles ought never to have been published in *De Hervorming*, conservative-liberal parliamentarian J.G. Gleichman (1843-1906) promptly resigned his seat in the board of the national NPB. Commotion also manifested itself at the 1892 NPB meeting. The representative of the branch of Menaldumadeel voiced the opinion of many when he stated that he would no longer recommend reading *De Hervorming* if Van Loenen Martinet continued to give the general public the impression “that the NPB is going in a socialist direction.”<sup>110</sup> The controversy surrounding his editorship did not prevent Van Loenen Martinet from continuing to write about ‘socialism’ in a positive way. In the first issue of 1893, he said that in political socialism “a voice testifying to religion” could be heard, with ‘religion’ being man’s innate albeit not always consciously experienced desire to live in perfect harmony with his fellow human beings, nature, and God.<sup>111</sup> Later that year, he repeatedly asked why the word ‘socialism’ continued to cause annoyance among modernists. His answer was that most modernists wrongfully identified ‘socialism’ with one particular political faction (Domela’s), while it in fact denoted an organisation of society in which the social question would be permanently resolved. Anyone who felt that individualism had been carried too far and that social reform was needed, he maintained, was actually a ‘socialist’.<sup>112</sup>

Although, in the words of his necrologist referred to in chapter 2, his political ideas came close to those of the SDAP, Van Loenen Martinet would never leave the liberal side of the political spectrum.<sup>113</sup> As chapter 9 addresses in more detail, this was true of most Dutch modernists. In the 1890s and early 1900s, Van Loenen Martinet even stressed his commitment to political liberalism by standing for elections on behalf of so-called ‘*radicalen*’, progressive

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<sup>106</sup> J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Over “den normalen arbeidsdag”’, appendix to *Ibid.* 1891-20 (16 May 1891), 81-82. A reprint of his lecture as published in *De Hervorming* was issued as a separate brochure: J. van Loenen Martinet, *Over “den normalen arbeidsdag”. Rede* (Amsterdam 1891).

<sup>107</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Vóór de stembus’, *De Hervorming* 1891-23 (6 June 1891), 91; J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Voor een persoonlijk feit’, *Ibid.* 1891-24 (13 June 1891), 96.

<sup>108</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘De private grondeigendom voor de rechtbank van godsdienst en zedelijkheid’, *Ibid.* 1892-21 (21 May 1892), 81; 1892-22 (28 May 1892), 85-86; 1892-23 (4 June 1892), 90; 1892-25 (18 June 1892), 97-98; 1892-26 (25 June 1892), 101-102; 1892-27 (2 July 1892), 105-106.

<sup>109</sup> E.H. Kossmann, *De Lage Landen 1780-1980. Twee eeuwen Nederland en België* I. 1780-1934 (Amsterdam 1986), 281.

<sup>110</sup> “...van den kant van het socialisme op te gaan.” Quoted from: ‘Binnenland – Mr. J.G. Gleichman en “De Hervorming”’, *De Hervorming* 1892-45 (5 November 1892), 179-180, there 180. See also: Van Driel, ““De Hervorming””, 143.

<sup>111</sup> “...een stem die van religie getuigt...” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Een nieuw begin’, *De Hervorming* 1893-01 (7 January 1893), 2-3, there 2.

<sup>112</sup> J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Aan den heer W. Zaalberg’, *Ibid.* 1893-32 (12 August 1893), 126; 1893-33 (19 August 1893), 130-131; J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Uit een particulieren brief’, *Ibid.* 1893-36 (9 September 1893), 142.

<sup>113</sup> Oort, ‘Levensbericht van Johannes van Loenen Martinet’, 60.

liberals who came to be known as ‘vrijzinnig-democraten’ (‘liberal democrats’) as of 1901.<sup>114</sup> Tenthoff, on the other hand, was less committed to political liberalism. He sympathised with the ‘radicalen’, but occasionally contributed to Domela’s socialist magazine *Recht voor Allen* at the same time. He passed criticism on the labour movement, but simultaneously stood up for it in the modernist movement. Notwithstanding his ambiguous political identity, Tenthoff has doubtlessly served as a trailblazer for modernist ministers who came to embrace socialism in a political sense from the mid-1890s onwards – his biographer J.J. Kalma even calls him “one of the first red ministers.”<sup>115</sup> Many of these ‘rode dominees’ had a link to Friesland. Perhaps more than in any other province in the Netherlands, ministers in Friesland were confronted with the destitution of those who did not profit from industrial, technological, and economic progress. Another reason why particularly, but not exclusively modernist ministers in Friesland were willing to give their support to political socialism, had to do with the major influence Domela Nieuwenhuis, and later the SDAP, managed to exert on the poverty-stricken rural proletariat in that province: not being a socialist meant not having access to the churchless paupers. The red ministers openly rejected the kind of liberalism that had until then dominated the political orientation of the modernist movement and sympathised with the SDAP. Some of them joined this party as of the late 1890s; others felt attracted to political socialism, but would never join the SDAP; and still others initially had too many objections against the Social Democratic Workers’ Party, but became SDAP members in the course of the 1900s.

Examples of the first group are W. Bax (1836-1916) and H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga (1868-1920).<sup>116</sup> From the early 1890s onwards, Bax demonstrated in public meetings, such as in discussions with Domela and freethinker J.A. Fortuyn in 1890 and a lecture held in socialist hotbed Sint Annaparochie in 1893, a support for socialist politics. He felt that ministers were not only called to propagate ‘Christian principles’ on the pulpit, but also in the political arena, and that these Christian principles could best be actualised under the banner of social democracy.<sup>117</sup> His openly professed socialist political creed caused so much turmoil in the Dutch Reformed Church that some elders in The Hague successfully persuaded the synod in 1893 to express its disapproval of the way “in which Bax participates in the fight against private property and the existing social order.”<sup>118</sup> In response, Bax wrote a letter to the synod, which he never officially addressed but instead published as a brochure. It uncovers his motivation to sympathise

<sup>114</sup> Before the founding of the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* in 1901, Van Loenen Martinet sympathised with both the *Liberale Unie* and the *Radicale Bond*. In the 1890s and 1900s, he was several times a candidate on behalf of electoral associations that sympathised with one or both of these parties. See: V.G., ‘J. van Loenen Martinet’, *De Telegraaf. Zondagsblad* XI.3976 (22 August 1903), 1-2; Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 53. In 1894, he was said to endorse the program of the *Radicale Bond*. See, e.g.: ‘Pers-overzicht – Radicalen en rad.-liberalen’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1894-7580 (11 October 1894), 5. In 1898, he stated to endorse the political program of the *Liberale Unie*. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] ‘Vervolg nieuwstijdingen – De verkiezing te Deventer’, *De Telegraaf* VI.1865 (8 February 1898), 2. In 1901, he supported the founding of the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond*, which was a merger of the *Radicale Bond* and the left wing of the *Liberale Unie*. See: F. Netscher, ‘Nederlandsche politiek’, *De Locomotief* L.8 (20 April 1901), 5.

<sup>115</sup> J.J. Kalma, *Ds. J.Th. Tenthoff (1847-1916), een der eerste “rode dominees”*. *Bibliografische aantekeningen* (Leeuwarden 1981).

<sup>116</sup> Another example of this group, G.W. Melchers, who was the first minister to join the SDAP in 1896, is dealt with in: Noordegraaf, ‘Water en vuur’, 145-151.

<sup>117</sup> W. Bax, ‘Aan den heer W. Zaalberg te Deventer’, *De Hervorming* 1893-25 (24 June 1893), 98.

<sup>118</sup> “...de wijze waarop de heer Bax, predikant te Zaandam, deelneemt aan den strijd tegen het privaatsbezit en de bestaande orde der maatschappij...” Quoted from: *Handelingen NHK 1893*, 91-93.

with socialist politics. Bax repeated that the political application of Christian principles is realised in socialism. Two of those principles, love and justice, necessitate giving a decent existence to all. However, the capitalist organisation of society made this impossible. Bax did not subscribe to the Marxist, materialistic viewpoint that man is primarily the product of his environment, but he did emphasise that environmental conditions, such as poverty, have a strong influence on man's spiritual life. Attempts to reform individuals without attempts to change the existing fabric of society would therefore be of no avail; structural changes were needed. Against those who considered this to be in contravention of church regulations, which required all ministers to strengthen civil order and social harmony, Bax remonstrated that capitalism fostered and preserved social tensions. And did the Dutch Reformed Church, he rhetorically asked, oblige its ministers to cling to capitalism? Moreover, since the churches lost their working-class audience more and more to the socialist movement, participating in the latter was the only way in which ministers could get into contact with labourers.<sup>119</sup>

In 1897, Bax complied with Leeuwardian social democrats' request to take part in the parliamentary elections on their behalf, although he was no SDAP member; he only joined the party *after* his nomination. This stirred up ill-feeling among the national party executives. In *De Sociaaldemokraat* (*The Social Democrat*), the official party periodical, they published a press release in which they stated to reconcile themselves to the situation, but also strongly denounced the nomination of someone who had never before showed the intention to join the SDAP. 'Dubious elements' such as Bax might not be socialists in the same pure sense as confirmed SDAP members, and could abash the party.<sup>120</sup> Van der Goes, one of the founding fathers of the SDAP yet no party executive, questioned the purity of Bax's socialist persuasion in more guarded terms. Although he had declared that the essentially non-religious character of political socialism was no reason for the SDAP to deny membership to people with religious faith,<sup>121</sup> he could not hide his strong personal anti-religious sentiments in this case. In the cultural and literary journal *De Kroniek* (*The Chronicle*), he called Bax's candidature "remarkable" and insinuated that Bax represented some kind of "white-collar democracy" that falsely announced itself under the banner of social democracy.<sup>122</sup> Van der Goes thus implicitly associated being a minister with being necessarily bourgeois, and put the admittance into the SDAP of patrons of religion, whom he considered to be one of the cornerstones of the 'horrible' bourgeois social order, in a poor light.

Other modernist ministers nonetheless followed in Bax's footsteps. The Dutch Reformed Van den Bergh van Eysinga, for example, joined the SDAP in 1899. In a brochure, he justified this decision. The older he got, the more Van den Bergh van Eysinga came to notice how wicked contemporary society was. He had initially considered Christianity to be the only force that was

<sup>119</sup> W. Bax, *Verdediging en terechtwijzing ten opzichte eener synodale motie. Onuitgesproken toespraak* (Amsterdam 1894). The elders in The Hague reacted to Bax's brochure by publishing a brochure themselves, in which they argued that political socialism was a "*dwaalleer*" ("heresy") and that the abolishment of private property would not exterminate poverty; it would merely lead to the rejection of marriage, family life, church life and ultimately of God. See: *De "predikant-socialist". Een stem uit de boezem der Nederduitsche hervormde gemeente van 's-Gravenhage* (The Hague 1984).

<sup>120</sup> Vliegen, *Die onze kracht ontwaken deed* I, 198-200. See also: P.J. Troelstra, *Gedenkschriften* II. *Groei* (Amsterdam 1928), 155-156.

<sup>121</sup> S. de Wolff, *En toch...! Driekwart eeuw socialisme in vogelvlucht* (Amsterdam 1951), 103-104.

<sup>122</sup> "...witte-vesten-democratie..." Quoted from: F. van der Goes, 'Een opmerkelijke kandidatuur', *De Kroniek* III.133 (1897), 220. This interpretation was given in: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Witte-vesten-democratie', *De Hervorming* 1897-29 (17 July 1897), 115.

powerful enough to permeate society with a more idealistic spirit than the dominant spirit of greed, but, just as society in general, contemporary Christianity was imperfect and deformed. Because of this, he had joined and still participated in the modernist movement, which tried to revitalise both Christianity and society. In modernist circles, however, spiritual life was “dull” and there was a lack of “commiseration with the wounds and sins of the people.” After turning to Tolstoy – whose ‘practical Christianity’ he enthusiastically embraced as an alternative to deeply anti-religious early political socialism, but whose romantic portrayal of a historical Jesus he quickly came to reject – and after further studying philosophy and Marx’s writings in the mid-1890s, Van den Bergh van Eysinga began to realise that economic disparities were at the bottom of social misery. What particularly appealed to him in Marx’s thinking was historical materialism. According to him, this theory did not teach that, as many of Marx’s disciples believed, only matter is real and spirit is an illusion, but rather that “religion, art, science, ethics, all these invisible things are reflections of existing economical relations.” Van den Bergh van Eysinga hence came to believe that “the spiritual fatigue, the irreligion, the tremendous ugliness that I see and hate in our century and our nation” mirrored the ‘decomposing’ capitalist social structure. Similarly, he became convinced that if the economic organisation of society were to be improved, the general level of piety and morality in society would also improve. That he did not immediately join the SDAP had to do with his fear of the class struggle, a dominant element in socialist discourse. Yet, now that he realised that it was the intention of the SDAP not to *launch* a class struggle, for one was already waging, but more precisely to *solve* it, there was no obstacle left for him to finally join the “party of the future.”<sup>123</sup>

An example of the second group, consisting of politically socialist modernist ministers who kept aloof from the SDAP, is the Dutch Reformed A. W. van Wijk (1852-1918). Although sharing the ideal of a non-capitalist society for which the SDAP strived, he felt that it would be unconscionable for a Christian to join a party founded on the Marxist theory of class struggle and preoccupying itself with material interests while totally ignoring the spiritual causes of social wrongs.<sup>124</sup>

Van Wijk could not overcome his objections, but others, constituting the third group distinguished in the paragraph above, ultimately could. Examples are the ministers who established the Christian-socialist magazine *De Blijde Wereld* in 1902.<sup>125</sup> As its founders, all based in Friesland, explained in the first issue, the issuing of *De Blijde Wereld* was needed to show the anti-socialist bulk of Christians and the non-religious or at best religiously indifferent majority of socialists that “the two great forces of today,” Christianity and socialism, cannot do without each other to prepare the society of tomorrow. Instead of claiming that individual reform should

<sup>123</sup> “...dor was der modernen zieleleven...”; “...ook hier had men te weinig meegevoel met de wonden en zonden des volks.”; “...godsdienst, kunst, wetenschap, zedeleer, al die onzichtbare dingen zijn weerspiegelingen van bestaande oekonomische verhoudingen.”; “...de zielemoetheid, de ongodsdienstigheid, het schrikwekkend leelijke, dat ik gezien en gehaat had in onze eeuw en in ons volk.” Quoted from: H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, *Mijn toetreden tot de S.D.A.P.* (Amsterdam 1899). The quotes are on p. 7, p. 11, p. 12. Van den Bergh van Eysinga hoped to permeate socialism with a ‘spiritually aristocratic’ spirit – he used this term himself –, in the sense explained in chapter 6. See: Noordegraaf, *Henri van den Bergh van Eysinga*, 70-73.

<sup>124</sup> B. Hijma, ‘Wijk, Aart Willem van (1852-1918)’, in: J. Folkerts, J.M.M. Haverkate and F. Pereboom (eds.), *Overijsselse biografieën III. Levensbeschrijvingen van bekende en onbekende Overijsselaars* (Amsterdam and Meppel 1993), 132-136, there 133-134. See also: A.W. van Wijk, ‘Christensocialisme’, *De Hervorming* 1907-41 (12 October 1907), 324.

<sup>125</sup> Another example is A. de Koe (1866-1941), who did not belong to the circle around *De Blijde Wereld*. De Koe was an admirer of Tolstoy and joined the SDAP in 1903, after a stay of two years in a commune of Tolstoyans. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Uit Walden’, *Ibid.* 1903-08 (21 February 1903), 59-60.

precede a structural reform of society, as was proclaimed in the discourse dominant in modernist circles, or that it would flow from such a structural reform, as put forward in socialist discourse, these ministers argued that individual reform and social reform could only be accomplished if aimed for simultaneously.<sup>126</sup> The *Blijde Wereld* ministers had initially toyed with the idea of founding a political party of their own, but had dropped it due to a lack of support from colleagues who were known to have socialist sympathies, and out of fear that such a party would not stand a chance against the SDAP.<sup>127</sup> Although they unequivocally sided with the SDAP in their magazine, they felt that “most of its leaders and *Nieuwe Tijd* and *Volk*” defended the cause of social democracy in “a strong Marxist and anti-religious spirit,” which made it impossible for them to apply for SDAP membership.<sup>128</sup> *Het Volk* (*The People*) was a daily newspaper financed by the SDAP and edited by leading party members, such as Troelstra from its founding in 1899 until 1903 and P.L. Tak (1848-1907) between 1903 and 1907. *De Nieuwe Tijd* (*The New Age*) was a monthly in which the most pronouncedly anti-religious social democrats, particularly Frank van der Goes, Herman Gorter (1864-1927) and Anton Pannekoek (1873-1960), theorised about socialist philosophy. The last two were Marxist hardliners, who criticised the SDAP for pursuing a socialist state through parliamentary elections instead of a revolution, and would collaborate on the founding of the precursor of the Communist Party of the Netherlands in 1909.<sup>129</sup> After the *Blijde Wereld* ministers had come to realise that such men as Van der Goes, Gorter and Pannekoek were not representative of the entire SDAP, and after they had experienced that most party sympathisers “snap[ped] their fingers” at Marxist theorising, they could no longer stand by their objections. Moreover, as they explained in *De Blijde Wereld* of 15 December 1905,

the sense of duty to organise ourselves as social democrats; the certitude that we can combat Marxist prejudices [against religion] more easily within than outside of the party; the instigation of social democrats among our acquaintances, with whom we would like to collaborate; the satisfactory declaration of the SDAP that it is the duty of the party to break the political and economic power of the church without intending to hurt anyone’s religious feelings inside or outside of the party

had compelled them to finally join the SDAP.<sup>130</sup>

<sup>126</sup> “...de twee groote machten van onzen tijd...” Quoted from: ‘Aan de lezers’, ‘Is de uitgave van dit blad wensche-lijk?’, *De Blijde Wereld* I.1 (31 October 1902), 1.

<sup>127</sup> H.J. Wilzen, “‘De Blijde Wereld’ 1902-1932”, in: H.J. Wilzen and A. van Biemen (eds.), *Samen op weg. Vijftig jaar ontmoeting tussen christendom en socialisme in “De Blijde Wereld” en “Tijd en Taak”* (Amsterdam 1953), 17-90, there 38.

<sup>128</sup> As J.A. Bruins, Jr. (1872-1947), the central figure in the *Blijde Wereld* group, explained at a meeting of a socialist electoral association in Heerenveen on 14 January 1904. See: ‘Uit de partij – Buiten de partij’, *Het Volk* IV.1161 (17 January 1904), 2. Noordegraaf mentions Bruins, together with Melchers, as an example of early interrelationships between liberal Protestantism and political socialism. See: Noordegraaf, ‘Water en vuur’, 151-155.

<sup>129</sup> J.P. Gerber, *Anton Pannekoek and the Socialism of Workers’ Self-Emancipation, 1873-1960* (Dordrecht and Amsterdam 1989), 88-89.

<sup>130</sup> “...dat het gros van de leden der S.D.A.P. maling heeft aan alle filosofie in het algemeen en het Marxisme in het bijzonder [sic], het plichtsgevoel om ons als sociaal-demokraten te organiseeren, de zekerheid, dat wij in de partij gemakkelijker de Marxistische vooroordeelen tegen den godsdienst zouden kunnen bestrijden dan daarbuiten, de aandrang van sociaal-demokraten uit onze omgeving, met wie wij gaarne samenwerken wilden, de bevredigende verklaring der S.D.A.P., dat het de taak der partij is de politieke en economische macht der kerk te breken, zonder binnen of buiten haar kring de godsdienstige meening van iemand te willen kwetsen.” Quoted from: ‘Van verre en nabij’, *De Blijde Wereld* III.8 (15 December 1904), 3-4. See also: “‘De Blijde Wereld’”, *Het Volk* VII.1948 (10 August 1906), 1-2, there 2.

Socialist modernists considered their convictions to be the next phase in the religious development of mankind: whereas modernism had been a perfection of Protestantism, *socialist* modernism now announced itself as a perfection of modernism. The Dutch Reformed F. Reitsma (1876-1918), who did not belong to the *Blijde Wereld* group, but, until he distanced himself from the SDAP in the early 1910s, vented his socialist political creed in the local monthly *Vergeet mij niet* (*Do Not Forget Me*), reasoned in 1906 that only Christian socialism was able to bring the new religious enthusiasm after which the modernist movement aspired. Just as the latter had eventually superseded the *evangelische* movement, socialist modernism would in due course do the same with non-socialist modernism.<sup>131</sup> Reitsma therefore felt that it was “slightly premature” to call the emergence of modernism in the second half of the nineteenth century a ‘second Reformation’: “modernism is merely an intermediate stage.” Although he was not one hundred percent sure if socialist modernism was the *ultimate* completion of religious development and if the masses would embrace it, as “we [ministers, TK] are and continue to be bourgeois, interwoven with capitalist interests by descent, tradition and contacts,” he was convinced that modernist ministers could only make potentially successful attempts to spiritually reform society if they integrated the ideas expressed in socialism into their theology.<sup>132</sup> Also in 1906, the *Blijde Wereld* ministers stated that the modernist movement had fallen short in its social effectiveness, because its adherents had lacked the awareness that a precise application of modernist religious principles to social life inevitably leads to socialism. *True* modernism, they contended, was essentially socialist.<sup>133</sup> Dutch Reformed minister H.A.J. van Wijhe (1877-1909), who would take part in the parliamentary elections on behalf of the SDAP in the year of his death, fully agreed: to those modernists who firmly believed in the individual-centred ethics implied in the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors, he replied that socialism would break the power of some to exploit others and would hence “create the conditions enabling society, the family and the human personality to develop according to their own true nature.”<sup>134</sup> Because of this, Van Wijk affirmed, socialism was “a demand of Christianity.”<sup>135</sup> As Van den Bergh van Eysinga explained, religious socialism was a comprehensive philosophy of life. For socialist modernists, being socialist was thus no ‘addition’ to being modernist, but an essential and inseparable element of their modernist persuasion.<sup>136</sup>

While the socialist movement had been suffused with an anti-religious spirit in its earliest phase, S.K. Bakker, one of the *Blijde Wereld* ministers, now perceived an increased interest in spiritual affairs among blue-collar workers. “If I am correct,” he argued, “then there is a grand

<sup>131</sup> [F. Reitsma in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Neo-modernen’, *De Hervorming* 1906-27 (7 July 1906), 211.

<sup>132</sup> “...eenigszins voorbarig...”; “*Het modernisme is slechts haltepunt, geen nieuw station.*”; “...wij zijn en blijven bourgeois, door afkomst, traditie en connectie verweven met kapitalistische belangen.” Quoted from: F. Reitsma, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1906-32 (11 August 1906), 253-254.

<sup>133</sup> ‘Berichten, enz. – “De Blijde Wereld”’, *Ibid.* 1906-32 (11 August 1906), 251.

<sup>134</sup> “...en daarmee [zal het socialisme] en voor de gemeenschap en voor ‘t gezin en voor de menselijke persoonlijkheid scheppen zulke toestanden, die het mogelijk maken, dat elk van deze drie zich naar zijn eigen aard ontwikkelen kan.” Quoted from: H.A.J. van Wijhe, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1906-48 (1 December 1906), 381-382. In 1898, A. van der Heide had also stressed that only socialism enabled people to be true individuals. He had further argued that society was inevitably developing in a socialist direction, hence urging the modernist movement to anticipate this development and to advance socialists’ cause. See: A. van der Heide, *Socialisme en godsdienst. Voordracht, gehouden in de Vrije Gemeente op Maandag 21 Nov. 1898* (s.l. s.a.), 20, 30.

<sup>135</sup> “...socialistisch streven een eisch [...] van ‘t Christendom.” Quoted from: A.W. van Wijk, ‘Christen-socialisme’, *De Hervorming* 1907-40 (5 October 1907), 315-316, there 316.

<sup>136</sup> H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Antithese?’, *Ibid.* 1913-44 (1 November 1913), 350-351.

and important task for the NPB to fulfil: to turn this little spark into a bright flame, to strike the iron, which is getting hot, with a steady hand.”<sup>137</sup> In its endeavour to give every individual the opportunity to develop his inner life, the modernist movement had an ally in socialist politics. After all, as Bakker maintained, socialism rightfully taught that individuality only attains meaning when it is placed in the service of the community, but as long as people were bound in the chains of the capitalist system, they would not be able to develop themselves as individuals. Destroying these chains was exactly what socialism strived for.<sup>138</sup> If the modernist movement wanted to reach its goal, its ministers should establish more contact with the working class, which could only be realised if they actively participated in the socialist movement. Non-socialist ministers, an anonymous ‘minister outside of Friesland’ explained, did not recognise labourers’ yearning for spiritual fulfilment, as this yearning did not find expression in conventional Christian terminology, but rather in ‘socialist’ vocabulary.<sup>139</sup> In line with this, A. van der Heide, who had joined the SDAP in 1897, being the second minister to do so after his fellow modernist G.W. Melchers (1869-1952),<sup>140</sup> made a plea for a socialist preaching: to lead labourers back into religious and ecclesial life, ministers should address them in their own ‘language’, which was the language of social democracy.<sup>141</sup>

Not everyone in the SDAP was pleased to see ministers entering their party. In particular those who maintained that Marxism as an economic theory, intended to systematically overturn capitalism, and as a philosophy of life, grounded on the idea that there is no God, were inseparable, and who urged the SDAP to explicitly integrate this in its political programme, chided the *Blijde Wereld* ministers for defending a religious cause within party structures. R.K.H. Kuyper (1874-1934), for example, said that ministers were welcome to join the SDAP, especially to show religious labourers that their religious creed was perfectly compatible with a socialist political creed. However, ministers should not join the party in an attempt to change it, in an attempt to challenge the Marxist world view. In order to beat off attacks from political opponents, the party needed to have a solid ideological basis. The philosophical and scientific fundamentals of Marxism served this end best, all the more so since the proletariat intuited, and would in due course understand, that those fundamentals were completely in line with what he thought and felt. He would certainly not fall into the arms of the *Blijde Wereld* ministers, because

there is one philosophy [of life] at which the proletariat laughs in particular: it is the philosophy of those who are standing in between the orthodox Christian and the irreligious way of thinking and feeling, the philosophy of those who [...] have not yet completely shaken off the old and who cannot yet completely grasp the new. The proletariat is always the one [i.e. orthodox Christian] or the other [i.e. irreligious]. What is in between is [only professed] by a part of the bourgeoisie, and [only] by a

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<sup>137</sup> “Als ik in deze dingen juist zie, dan ligt hier een mooie en groote taak voor den Bond: dit vonkje aan te blazen tot een heldere vlam, dit ijzer, dat heet begint te worden, met vaste hand te smeden.” Quoted from: S.K. Bakker, ‘Kentering’, *Ibid.* 1907-07 (16 February 1907), 50-51, there 51.

<sup>138</sup> [S.K. Bakker in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – “De Blijde Wereld”-dag’, *Ibid.* 1912-22 (1 June 1912), 172. He had already put this forward in: S.K. Bakker, *De zedelijke beteekenis van het socialisme* (Rotterdam 1907), 13-14.

<sup>139</sup> Een predikant buiten Friesland, ‘Ingezonden stukken – “Toen en nu?”’, *De Hervorming* 1911-20 (20 May 1911), 158.

<sup>140</sup> De Harder, *Albertinus van der Heide*, 84-86.

<sup>141</sup> [A. van der Heide in: H. de Lang], ‘Redactioneel – “Odéon”’, *De Hervorming* 1914-29 (18 July 1914), 247-248.



part of that part of the bourgeoisie that turns to the proletarian camp. And the chances of winning the organised proletariat of our party [...] to religion are zero.<sup>142</sup>

In other words, Rudolf Kuyper believed that those who spiritually steered a middle course between orthodox Christianity and unbelief, which clearly referred to modernists, were essentially bourgeois and would therefore never be able to approach the proletariat.<sup>143</sup>

Another advocate of Marxist philosophy, Joseph Loopuit (1864-1923), also criticised socialist-minded ministers who were unwilling to simply be ‘absorbed’ into the socialist movement at large and entered into this movement as a distinct clique by loudly propagating that social democracy as such was not good enough.<sup>144</sup> In a 1907 brochure included in the series *Pro en contra (Pros and Cons)*, he crossed swords with liberal Reformed minister D.A. van Krevelen (1872-1947) on the issue of Christian socialism. Van Krevelen, who was not a member of the SDAP, maintained that socialism reaches its ultimate fulfilment when it is suffused with the piety and fraternal love that the ‘spirit of Christ’ awakens in one’s heart. Loopuit, however, considered Christian socialism to be undesirable and superfluous. By acting as a different current within the labour movement, Christian socialism could separate some labourers from the others and hence weaken the strength of the proletariat as a whole. Christianity was not needed anyway to establish the transition from a capitalist production economy to a socialist society – after all, as Loopuit believed, this transition was inevitable –, but champions of Christian socialism might lead some labourers to think that it was and might accordingly slow down the transition process. Loopuit further argued that Christian socialism was not free of bourgeois taints and was at odds with the both inherently non-religious and revolutionary character of socialism.<sup>145</sup> He later blamed the *Blijde Wereld* ministers for trying to ‘Christianise’ the class struggle.<sup>146</sup>

Rudolf Kuyper and Loopuit were not the only ones finding fault with the entrance of modernist ministers into the SDAP. Those socialist-minded modernists who objected to the party’s preaching of the class struggle, such as Van Krevelen and Van Wijk, vented criticism as well. The latter wrote in 1907 that the SDAP was permeated with the same spirit of selfishness and greed of which it accused capitalism: after all, the SDAP wanted to overturn the capitalist order because this was in the interest of one particular class, and wanted to do this by means of a

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<sup>142</sup> “En er is één filosofie, waar het proletariaat in ’t bijzonder maling aan heeft: het is de filosofie van hen, die tusschen het oude orthodox-christelijke en het relegielooze [sic] gevoels- en denklevens in staan, de filosofie van hen die [...] het oude nog niet geheel hebben afgeschud en het nieuwe nog niet geheel kunnen omvatten. De proletariër is altijd het eene of het andere. Het daar tusschen liggende is van een deel der bourgeoisie, ook nog van een deel van dat deel der bourgeoisie, ’t welk naar het proletarische kamp overgaat. En de kansen om het georganiseerde proletariaat onzer partij [...] voor de religie te winnen, zijn nul.” Quoted from: R. Kuyper, ‘De Blijde Wereld’, *Het Volk* VII.1951 (14 August 1906), 1.

<sup>143</sup> In 1908, Kuyper repeated that Marxism as a philosophy ‘naturally’ satisfied the spiritual needs of the proletariat and again accused the *Blijde Wereld* ministers of imposing their religious convictions on the SDAP as a whole. See: R. Kuyper, ‘Sociaal-democratie, marxisme en godsdienst’, *Ibid.* IX.2561 (11 August 1908), 5; R. Kuyper, ‘De verstoorde “Blijde Wereld”’, *Ibid.* IX.2598 (17 September 1908), 5.

<sup>144</sup> There was one modernist minister who was simply ‘absorbed’ into the socialist movement: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr. He resigned his office in 1899 and joined the SDAP. Soon afterwards, he renounced his religious faith altogether. See: Noordegraaf, ‘F.W.N. Hugenholtz als voorganger van de Protestantenvbond in Schiedam’, 42.

<sup>145</sup> D.A. van Krevelen and J. Loopuit, *Christen-socialisme* (Baarn 1907). See also: ‘Boekbeoordeeling’, *Het Volk* VIII.2316 (22 October 1907), 6; A.W. van Wijk, ‘Christen-socialisme’, *De Hervorming* 1907-39 (28 September 1907), 306-307; 1907-40 (5 October 1907), 315-316; 1907-41 (12 October 1907), 324.

<sup>146</sup> J. Loopuit, ‘Ingezonden – Godsdienst en socialisme’, *Het Volk* IX.2477 (1 May 1908), 7.

struggle for absolute power and control of all capital goods. Christian socialists, on the other hand, wanted a new social order because the capitalist system made it impossible for them to actualise the love and justice by which Christianity was driven. How then could a Christian socialist feel to belong in the SDAP?<sup>147</sup> The *Blijde Wereld* ministers had nonetheless already declared in 1906 “to feel more and more at home in the SDAP.” This had to do with the rapidly diminishing influence of Marxist hardliners, some of whom were even expelled from the SDAP in 1909.<sup>148</sup> As a result, explicitly intermingling one’s socialist political creed with a religious creed became less controversial within the SDAP.

Although ministers remained a numerically small group within the SDAP, they were partially responsible for giving the party a different appearance. This found expression in an alternative, jesting interpretation of the abbreviation ‘SDAP’ taking root in the 1910s and 1920s; non-socialists came to denote the party as the ‘*Schoolmeesters-, Dominees- en Advocatenpartij*’ (‘Party of Schoolteachers, Ministers and Lawyers’).<sup>149</sup> With the word ‘ministers’, *modernist* ministers were meant. There were non-modernist ministers with leanings towards socialist politics, but they did not move in SDAP circles.<sup>150</sup> In accordance with the notion of an antithesis between those ideologies with and those without an explicit Christian basis, which was one of the fundamentals of neo-Calvinist thinking and also a prevailing thought in orthodox Protestant thinking in general, such ministers supported socialist-oriented parties based on Protestant principles, examples of which were the *Bond van Christen-Socialisten* (League of Christian Socialists or BCS) in the 1910s and the *Christelijk-Democratische Unie* (Christian Democratic Union) in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>151</sup> By referring to the SDAP as a party of schoolteachers, ministers and lawyers instead of labourers, non-socialists not only scoffed at the SDAP, but also pointed to a trend later observers would confirm: the SDAP, which had never solely consisted of or solely attracted labourers, became more and more bourgeois – that is to say, its middle-class

<sup>147</sup> A.W. van Wijk, ‘Christen-socialisme’, *De Hervorming* 1907-41 (12 October 1907), 324.

<sup>148</sup> Notwithstanding their orthodox Marxist persuasion, Rudolf Kuiper and Loopuit were not expelled and decided not to join Gorter’s and Pannekoek’s communist party of their own accord. They thus stayed in the SDAP. Kuiper would even revise his idea about the *Blijde Wereld* ministers: in 1912, he wrote that he saw them as full party members, at whom he looked no differently than at other SDAP members. See: H. van Hulst, ‘1920-1930’, in: H. van Hulst, A. Pleysier and A. Scheffer (eds.), *Het Roode Vaandel volgen wij. Geschiedenis van de Sociaaldemocratische Arbeiderspartij van 1880 tot 1940* (The Hague 1969), 87-178, there 64.

<sup>149</sup> The ‘s’ was also said to stand for ‘students’ and the ‘d’ for ‘doctors’. See: *Ibid.*, 111. Although the ‘a’ stood for ‘lawyers’ in non-socialists’ nickname for the SDAP, Blom differentiates between schoolteachers, ministers and *engineers* as the groups representing what he calls ‘intellectual socialism’ within the SDAP. See: Blom, *Frank van der Goes*, 300-301.

<sup>150</sup> One exception was a group of orthodox Protestants around Anke van der Vlies (1837-1939), who was known as ‘Enka’. This author had laid the foundations of the League of Christian Socialists (BCS), about which more is said in the note below, in 1907. She and several fellow BCS members joined the SDAP in 1912, but decided to return to the BCS in 1918. See: H. Langeveld, *Protestants en progressief. De Christelijk-Democratische Unie 1916-1946* (The Hague 1988), 17.

<sup>151</sup> The League of Christian Socialists was founded on an orthodox Protestant basis. Several years later, due to the efforts of Dutch Reformed minister Bart de Ligt (1883-1938), its basis was broadened. De Ligt is hard to characterise. Raised as an orthodox Protestant, he never became a modernist. His pacifism did, however, meet with response in the modernist movement, especially among socialist-minded modernists who opposed the attitude of the SDAP towards the First World War. A.R. de Jong (1883-1970) was one of them. In 1920, he became the leader of the *Bond van Religieuze Anarcho-Communisten* (League of Religious Anarchist Communists), which was, on the one hand, highly controversial in modernist circles, but exerted, on the other hand, some attraction on people moving in the left periphery of the modernist movement, such as L.A. Bähler and F.L. Ortt (1866-1959). See: Noordegraaf, *A.R. de Jong*, esp. 72-100. The Christian Democratic Union, founded in 1926, had a narrow orthodox Protestant basis. See: Langeveld, *Protestants en progressief*, 304-305.

element increased both in strength and influence, particularly at the level of party leadership.<sup>152</sup> In 1919, the *Blijde Wereld* ministers were even in “almost complete” control of party leadership in the province of Friesland.<sup>153</sup>

Taking into account one of the main arguments of this study, namely that the modernist movement was a bourgeois phenomenon and therefore exerted little attraction on the working classes, an important finding needs to be stressed. As said, contrary to Domela’s SDB, the SDAP took a ‘neutral’ stance towards individual outlooks on life, treating religion as a private affair. It was less revolutionary, less hostile towards the bourgeoisie and less abhorred by religion, and therefore more acceptable to modernists than the early socialist movement led by Domela. In turn, the entry of modernist ministers into the SDAP contributed to the strengthening of the party’s bourgeois element. Hence, crucially, instead of successfully enlarging the working-class element in the modernist movement, modernists contributed to making the party political flagship – the SDAP – of the movement that attempted to defend the interests of working-class people – the labour movement – more middle-class, not so much with regard to the electorate of the SDAP, but rather with regard to the party’s ethics, appearance and leadership.<sup>154</sup> There is an interesting parallel between the social ethics gaining prominence in the SDAP as of the 1910s and those implied in the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors that was so dominant in modernist circles. In fact, the core idea expressed in this discourse that spiritually ‘less developed’ people needed guidance from spiritually ‘more developed’ people, which, as chapter 6 has argued, in practice meant that lower-class people needed guidance from people from higher classes to fulfil themselves as human beings, found a socialist counterpart in the political programme of the SDAP, stipulated in 1912:

The proletariat will receive an experience, a scientific and political education, a social and ethical uplift and an expansion and reinforcement of its organisation in and through the class struggle, which will not only enable it to break the antagonism of the ruling class, but will also get it ready for its task to take its position [in society].<sup>155</sup>

At the time, labourers were thus not yet deemed capable enough of adequately exercising power themselves.<sup>156</sup> The party, which at the level of leadership was dominated by people with a bourgeois background, offered them ‘guided experience’ to acquire these skills. The SDAP left open the possibility of adding a religious sauce to that: modernists could hence see the SDAP as a ‘*leerschool*’ (‘school’) educating people in *total*, including ethical-spiritual self-realisation. Liberal Reformed minister W. Banning (1888-1971) would become the grand and influential

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<sup>152</sup> L.J. Altena, ‘Bürger in der Sozialdemokratie. Ihre Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der Sozialdemokratischen Arbeiterpartei (SDAP) in den Niederlanden 1894-1914’, *Geschiede und Geselschaft* XX.4 (October 1994), 533-548. Altena concludes that the working-class element of the SDAP leadership was biggest in the first years after the party’s founding. See: *Ibid.*, 538.

<sup>153</sup> Wilzen, “‘De Blijde Wereld’ 1902-1932”, 64.

<sup>154</sup> Wilzen states that it was due to the *Blijde Wereld* ministers’ enduring efforts that the climate in the SDAP became less hostile towards religion. See: *Ibid.*, 86.

<sup>155</sup> “Het proletariaat verkrijgt in en door den klassenstrijd een ervaring, een wetenschappelijke en politieke ontwikkeling, een maatschappelijke en zedelijke verheffing en een uitbreiding en versterking zijner organisatie, die het niet alleen in staat stellen, den tegenstand der heerschende klasse te breken, doch het ook rijp te maken voor zijn taak om hare plaats in te nemen.” Quoted in: P.J. Troelstra, *Gedenkschriften III. Branding* (Amsterdam 1929), 171.

<sup>156</sup> M. Adang, *Voor sociaal-democratie, smaakopvoeding en verheffend genot. De Amsterdamse vereniging “Kunst aan het Volk” (1903-1928)* (Amsterdam 2008), 52.

champion of such ‘cultural socialism’ as of the 1930s.<sup>157</sup> Thus, modernists did not have to change their outlook on life to be fully accepted in the SDAP. As the view of the *Blijde Wereld* ministers on individual and social reform evinces, and the ethical parallel explained above suggests, the entrance of modernist ministers into the SDAP should accordingly not be seen as a total rejection of the social ethics implied in the dominant modernist discourse as such, but rather as a rejection of the politically liberal politics most modernists inferred from this discourse. It was perhaps (partially) therefore that, in spite of tensions between socialist and politically liberal modernists, addressed in more detail below, a feared disintegration of the NPB along the lines of political persuasions never actually occurred.<sup>158</sup>

Modernist ministers participating in the labour movement remained a numerically small group, but such men as Bax, Van den Bergh van Eysinga, Van Wijk and those centred around *De Blijde Wereld* did make political socialism in general and the SDAP in particular more acceptable and more respectable within the modernist movement. They paved the way for other modernists to join socialist political parties and to set up or support initiatives with politically socialist leanings. The three most important of these initiatives were the *Religieus-Socialistisch Verbond* (Religious Socialist League or RSV), the *Arbeidersgemeenschap der Woodbrookers* (Woodbrookers’ Community of Labourers) and *Kerk en Vrede* (Church and Peace).

Of the eleven people who convened the inaugural meeting of the Religious Socialist League, held on 2 January 1915, three had an orthodox Protestant background, two could be counted among the adherents of little religions, while six actively participated in the modernist movement.<sup>159</sup> The RSV wanted to unite all people whose socialist political creed was rooted in a religious conviction, whether they belonged to the SDAP, another party, or to no party at all, and regardless of their exact outlook on life. Moreover, it propagated socialism in religious circles, made a stand against the dominant materialistic world view in socialist circles, and convened meetings on Sunday mornings modelled after church services.<sup>160</sup> These meetings could be seen as a late realisation of the plea some modernists had made for an ‘*arbeiderskerk*’ (‘labour church’) in the 1890s – not with the intention of founding a new denomination next to

<sup>157</sup> Hartmans characterises Banning’s ‘cultural socialism’ as “a strict, ethical ideal, having a strong ascetic tendency and primarily putting emphasis on the duties every individual had towards society. Because of the high demands made upon the socialist individual, it had a distinctly elitist character, charging the elite with the duty to uplift the other members of society to a higher level.” See: R. Hartmans, *Vijandige broeders? De Nederlandse sociaal-democratie en het nationaal-socialisme* (Amsterdam 2012), 258. The similarity with the social ethics implied in the dominant modernist discourse is obvious. On cultural socialism in general, see: W.P. Blockmans, “‘Beziel tot hooger Leven!’ Sociaal-democratische cultuurpolitiek in Nederland tijdens het Interbellum”, in: J. Berting, J.C. Breman and P.B. Lehning (eds.), *Mensen, macht en maatschappij. Een bundel sociaal-wetenschappelijke opstellen* (Meppel and Amsterdam 1987), 189-209.

<sup>158</sup> For these tensions, see: Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 484-489; A.R. de Jong, ‘Nu verder’, *De Hervorming* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 52-53, there 53; F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen’, *Ibid.* 1925-15 (11 April 1925), 114; J. de Louter, ‘Oud en nieuw’, *Ibid.* 1926-23 (5 June 1926), 177-178, there 178.

<sup>159</sup> Those with an orthodox Protestant background were minister Bart de Ligt and authors Anke van der Vlies and Daan van der Zee (1880-1969). At the time, De Ligt could no longer be called orthodox, but he was no modernist either. The two ‘occultists’ were Kees Meijer (1863-1933), who would found the association *De Nieuwe Gedachte* (The New Thought) in 1916 and the magazine *Het Nieuwe Leven* (*The New Life*) in 1918 as means to spread his mystical-socialist world view, and Theosophist Corrie de Vos (1879-1936). The modernists in question were ministers S.K. Bakker, H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, J.A. Bruins, Jr., A. van der Heide, M. van Leeuwen Pzn. (1877-1950) and J.J. Meyer. See: ‘Redactioneel – Religieus-Socialistisch Verbond’, *Ibid.* 1915-01 (2 January 1915), 6.

<sup>160</sup> Such Sunday morning meetings had already been held in the years prior to the founding of the RSV, under the banner of local associations of religious socialists.

the existing churches, but rather to organise separate services with the particular objective of preventing working-class people from forswearing their faith in God, in which a politically socialist message was coupled with religious worship and concrete social activities.<sup>161</sup> Banning, who had joined the SDAP in 1914 and would join the editorial board of *De Blijde Wereld* in 1926, and P. Eldering, a member of the BCS since 1915, would come to hold influential positions in the RSV in the 1920s.<sup>162</sup>

From 25 April 1919 onwards, the Woodbrookers' Community of Labourers championed social reform on a socialist basis. As its name indicates, it was embedded within the larger association of 'Woodbrookers'. The latter had come into being in 1908 after several students studying at the theological faculty of Leiden University had visited the Quaker training centre of Woodbrooke in the United Kingdom and, deeply impressed by the spirit of brotherhood, social concern and simple devoutness they had experienced there, had decided to stir up this 'spirit of Woodbrooke' in the Netherlands. The association of Woodbrookers intended to bring orthodox and modernists together in order to seek a new type of piety transcending theological differences of opinion. In spite of its interdenominational character, it primarily took root in the modernist movement, particularly attracting right-wing modernists. Banning was the central figure in the Woodbrookers' Community of Labourers, and, because he also got involved with *De Blijde Wereld* and the RSV, became the most prominent propagator of Christian socialism in the 1920s and 1930s. He hoped that the labour movement and liberal Christianity would ultimately flow together in a perfect symbiosis, in the sense that being a socialist and being a liberal Christian would be two sides of the same coin. Although he was more active on the political level than in the modernist movement, Banning did occasionally express this hope in *De Hervorming*.<sup>163</sup>

Founded on 8 October 1924 at the instigation of Remonstrant theologian G.J. Heering and liberal Reformed minister J.B.Th. Hugenholtz (1888-1973), the association *Kerk en Vrede* did not, contrary to the *Blijde Wereld* group, the RSV and the Woodbrookers' Community of Labourers, proclaim that a politically socialist creed was the logical consequence of a Christian creed. It rather tried to persuade Christians, irrespective of their theological and ecclesial orientation, that an anti-militarist or pacifist creed was the logical consequence of their religious creed. Yet, *Kerk en Vrede* did receive most support from Christians with politically socialist

<sup>161</sup> The establishment of a 'labour church', an idea borrowed from British Unitarians, was championed by, among others, E.C. Knappert, A. de Koe (1866-1941), A. van der Heide and F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr. See: A. de Koe, 'Een stem uit de Engelsche "Kerk van den Arbeid"', *De Hervorming* 1894-49 (8 December 1894), 194; A. van der Heide, 'De "Labour Church"', *Ibid.* 1895-05 (2 February 1895), 18; E.C. Knappert, 'De Engelsche Arbeidskerk', *Ibid.* 1896-37 (12 September 1896), 145-146; 1896-38 (19 September 1896), 149-150; 1896-39 (26 September 1896), 154; 1896-40 (3 October 1896), 157-158; A. van der Heide, 'De Engelsche Arbeiderskerk', *Ibid.* 1896-43 (24 October 1896), 170; Noordegraaf, 'F.W.N. Hugenholtz als voorganger van de Protestantenvond in Schiedam', 42.

<sup>162</sup> More on the RSV is given in: P.C. Van Gestel, *Het religieus-socialisme* (Leuven 1932), 236-243; Noordegraaf, *Henri van den Bergh van Eysinga (1868-1920)*, 60-61. Due to Banning, who thought the name '*De Blijde Wereld*' was too 'romantic', the magazine was renamed '*Tijd en Taak*' in 1932.

<sup>163</sup> E.g.: W. Banning, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Krachten der toekomst', *De Hervorming* 1919-35 (30 August 1919), 151-152; W. Banning, 'Godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven – Vrijzinnig hervormde kerkpolitiek en wat er uit volgen kan', *Ibid.* 1924-05 (2 February 1924), 36-38; W. Banning, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Socialisme, vrijheid en persoonlijkheid', *Ibid.* 1924-11 (15 March 1924), 83-85. For more on the Woodbrookers' Community of Labourers, see: C. Huijsen, *Socialisme als opdracht. De religieus-socialistische Arbeiders Gemeenschap der Woodbrookers en de PvdA – de geschiedenis van een relatie* (Baarn 1986), 22-29, 45-70. The Woodbrookers had their headquarters in Barchem and were often referred to with the toponym Barchem.

ideas,<sup>164</sup> and, at least before the Second World War, with liberal Protestant religious views.<sup>165</sup> One of its sympathisers was P. Eldering, who regularly vented in *De Hervorming* that Christian, pacifist socialism was the ultimate fulfilment of the Gospel message and as such the religion of the future.<sup>166</sup>

Modernists who became socialists felt that too little was done in the modernist movement to Christianise society and that this Christianisation could only be realised if the modernist movement allied itself to the labour movement. But socialism was not only a remedy to cure the social timorousness of the modernist movement; some socialist modernists also embraced socialism because they derived *religious* inspiration or *spiritual* satisfaction from it, which old-school modernism was unable to give them. This applied both to modernists who had religious views approaching those of occultists, and right-wing modernists. Although far from all socialist modernists sympathised with right-wing modernism and not every right-wing modernist identified as a socialist, there undeniably was a strong link between being a right-wing modernist and being a socialist modernist, already noticed by modernists themselves in the 1920s.<sup>167</sup> The reason for that, as Eldering suggested, was that the theological focus of right-wing modernists on sin, conversion, Christology and eschatology – themes ignored in old-school modernist theology – came to the fore in a socialist view of society. Christian socialism, he contended, made people realise that social wrongs were a consequence of their innate sinfulness and that these wrongs could hence only be eradicated if they converted themselves – that is, if they stood up not only against their own vices, but also against the greed- and selfishness-based capitalist system. Moreover, Christian socialism was oriented on Christ as a ‘redeemer’, as someone who preaches about sin and conversion as defined above, and kept people’s eyes fixed on the eschatological ideal of a new earth, the Kingdom of God.<sup>168</sup>

<sup>164</sup> Consider, for example, the religious and political orientation of some of its most influential supporters: J.B.Th. Hugenholtz and P. Eldering had been members of the BCS; the liberal Reformed M.C. van Wijhe had been a member of the SDAP and the precursor of the CPN; J.J. Buskes, Jr. (1899-1980) belonged to the Reformed Churches in Restored Union and the SDAP; K.H. Kroon (1904-1983), who was a fellow church member of Buskes, sympathised with and later joined the SDAP; F. Schurer (1898-1968) was a member of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Christian Democratic Union. Later, in 1957, some members of *Kerk en Vrede* would contribute to the founding of the *Pacifistisch-Socialistische Partij* (Pacifist Socialist Party), among them liberal Reformed minister H. de Graaf (1911-1991). For more details on the history of *Kerk en Vrede* and modernists’ role in it, see: H. van den Berg and T. Coppes, *Dominees in het geweer. Het christen-antimilitarisme van Kerken Vrede, 1924-1950* (Amersfoort 1982); G.J. van den Boomen, *Honderd jaar vredesbeweging in Nederland* (Amstelveen 1983), 135-146; Exalto, “‘Dit koninkrijk tartende oorlogsbedrijf’”, 26-28; Noordegraaf, *P. Eldering (1868-1954)*, 36-40.

<sup>165</sup> Langeveld, *Protestants en progressief*, 120-123.

<sup>166</sup> E.g.: P. Eldering, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De predikant als dienaar van het Evangelie’, *De Hervorming* 1923-37 (13 September 1923), 292-294; P. Eldering, ‘Christen-socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1926-25 (19 June 1926), 194-195; 1926-32 (7 August 1926), 250-251. See also: P. Eldering, *De predikant als dienaar van de gemeente, de kerk en het Evangelie. Rede, gehouden op de algemeene vergadering der Remonstrantsche Broederschap* (Hillegom [1923]).

<sup>167</sup> E.g.: P. Feenstra, Jr., ‘Ingezonden’, *De Hervorming* 1925-03 (17 January 1925), 21; F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Vereeniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen’, *Ibid.* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 52; F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen’, *Ibid.* 1925-15 (11 April 1925), 114; D. Hans, ‘De sociale taak der kerk’, *Ibid.* 1926-42 (16 October 1926), 332-333; G.H. van Senden, ‘Buitenland – Religieus-socialistische periodieken’, *Ibid.* 1929-07 (13 July 1929), 52. G. Horreüs de Haas is a pre-eminent example of a ‘left-wing’ socialist modernist. See: Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 70. Horreüs de Haas argued that, even though many socialists did not acknowledge this, the socialist thought was essentially religious rather than materialistic: socialism did not merely try to improve people’s living conditions, but to uplift them as human beings by enabling them to realise their spiritual potential. See, e.g.: G. Horreüs de Haas, *Godsdienst en socialisme* (Amsterdam 1924), esp. 101-102.

<sup>168</sup> P. Eldering, ‘Christen-socialisme’, *De Hervorming* 1926-32 (7 August 1926), 250-251.

Although their numbers were small, socialist modernist ministers made themselves heard loudly and vigorously – to such an extent, even, that some modernists with politically liberal sympathies began to feel uncomfortable. Even before 1900, W. Zaalberg and H. Vrendenberg Czn. passionately warned their fellow modernists not to embrace socialism. When union leader and prohibitionist Th. Postma (1824-1906) asserted in 1884 that the modernist movement was flourishing less than it could have been due to the unwillingness of the NPB to defend the material interests of the lower class, Zaalberg promptly reached for his pen.<sup>169</sup> Together with F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., who would revise his opinion and would become a socialist after his migration to Grand Rapids, Zaalberg argued that it was ‘ethically impossible’ for modernists to support the labour movement: after all, the latter ultimately only cared about the satisfaction of working-class material needs, while the modernist movement was after people’s moral uplift.<sup>170</sup> In a series of articles published in 1893, he stressed that modernism was incompatible with *any* form of socialism, because a socialist world view is inherently statist. The state exists to advance justice, but it was ‘chimerical’ to think that it would ever be able to ensure that everyone can live in the same material conditions. While the sixteenth-century Reformation had liberated people from the chains of the church and modernists had freed people from the chains of confessions of faith, socialists now wanted to throw people into new chains, those of the state.<sup>171</sup> In *Nieuw Leven*, Vrendenberg also struck an anti-socialist note.<sup>172</sup> When it was decided at the general NPB meeting of 1905 that the NPB would continue to subsidise *De Blijde Wereld*, which it had done since 1903, and would discontinue subsidising *Nieuw Leven*, which it had done since the latter’s founding in 1887, Vrendenberg felt confirmed in his opinion that the NPB was gradually turning into a socialist association.<sup>173</sup>

Similar complaints were uttered many times thereafter. In 1907, for example, C.J. Niemeijer thought that the widely publicised activities of socialist ministers made people ill-disposed rather than sympathetic towards the modernist movement, even causing some modernists to distance themselves from it. It was therefore particularly lamentable that *De Hervorming* oftentimes ‘coquetted’ with socialism.<sup>174</sup> This last accusation could increasingly be heard after the radical editorial transformation of *De Hervorming* in 1918.<sup>175</sup> B.D. Eerdmans

<sup>169</sup> [Th. Postma in:] ‘Veertiende algemeene vergadering van den Nederl. Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* 1884-46 (15 November 1884), 183-185, there 185; Th. Postma, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Repliek’, *Ibid.* 1884-49 (6 December 1884), 197; 1884-52 (27 December 1884), 210.

<sup>170</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Een eisch van het materialistisch socialisme afgewezen’, *Ibid.* 1884-47 (22 November 1884), 187; W. Zaalberg, ‘Binnenland – Bij brood alleen niet’, *Ibid.* 1885-01 (3 January 1885), 2-3.

<sup>171</sup> W. Zaalberg, ‘Christelijk socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1893-21 (27 May 1893), 81-82; 1893-22 (3 June 1893), 85-85; W. Zaalberg, ‘Nog eens: Christelijk socialisme’, *Ibid.* 1893-29 (22 July 1893), 114; W. Zaalberg, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1893-34 (26 August 1893), 136.

<sup>172</sup> To the great indignation of modernists with socialist leanings. E.g.: [J. van Loenen Martinet], “‘Nieuw Leven’ belasterd?”, *Ibid.* 1899-48 (2 December 1899), 197; A.W. van Wijk, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De bond en “Nieuw Leven”’, *Ibid.* 1900-47 (24 November 1900), 366; F. Spiekman, ‘Ingezonden stukken – “Nieuw Leven”’, *Ibid.* 1903-12 (21 March 1903), 94.

<sup>173</sup> [H. Vrendenberg Cz. in: B.D. Eerdmans], ‘Berichten, enz. – Twee opmerkingen over de algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1905-45 (11 November 1905), 356-357, there 357; [H. Vrendenberg Cz. in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Een valsche voorstelling bestreden’, *Ibid.* 1905-50 (16 December 1905), 397. When social democrat Bakker gave a lecture on social democracy at the meeting of modern theologians in 1907, Vrendenberg disdainfully referred to it as ‘propagandistic chitchat.’ See: P.B. Westerdijk, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Protest en advies’, *Ibid.* 1907-16 (20 April 1907), 126; H. Vrendenberg Cz., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Antwoord aan den heer Westerdijk’, *Ibid.* 1907-17 (27 April 1907), 134.

<sup>174</sup> C.J. Niemeijer, ‘Kroniek’, *Teekenen des Tijds* IX (1907), 224-239, there 234.

<sup>175</sup> See also: Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige “meneer”’, 54.

repeatedly blamed social democrat A. van der Hoeve for misusing his position as co-editor of *De Hervorming* to champion socialist politics. Van der Hoeve's politicised writings, Eerdmans argued, had as their consequence that "more and more, a socialist stamp is being set on the NPB."<sup>176</sup> According to lawyer J. Frima (1890-1944), Van der Hoeve's editorial colleague H.T. de Graaf also effected that the NPB "is more and more identified with socialists and communists, which is no surprise, as [...] the 'red' ministers are only too happy to beat the big drum."<sup>177</sup> F.C.M. Boenders was of the same mind: in the church, the NPB, *De Hervorming* and other magazines, politically liberal modernists let themselves be shouted down by socialist co-religionists. He therefore urged politically like-minded modernists to manifest themselves more explicitly as *liberals*.<sup>178</sup> H.Y. Groenewegen was dissatisfied with the 'loudness' of the socialist minority in the modernist movement as well: having lost "many of its best readers and contributors" due to the socialist-minded editorial course Van Loenen Martinet had steered in the 1890s, *De Hervorming*, he implied in 1925, should have never contained articles in support of socialist politics.<sup>179</sup> Liberal- and modernist-minded jurist J. de Louter (1847-1932), to name a last example, chided all modernist preachers who sowed discord among modernists by mixing their religious message with a political one.<sup>180</sup> Although, as said before, the modernist movement did not fall apart, socialism did affect its already fragile unity: some NPB branches and modernist-oriented congregations began to have a preference for preachers with socialist leanings, while others barred socialists from their pulpits.<sup>181</sup>

## 5. The Modernist Movement and Socialism: An Evaluation

The turn of some towards socialism thus caused tensions within the modernist movement. But did it also make the 'gap' that modernists had perceived between their movement and the working classes in the late nineteenth century any smaller? The answer can only be in the negative. The lamentation that the modernist movement failed to reach working-class people could still be heard in the first decades of the twentieth century.<sup>182</sup> As said in the introductory chapter, it is always difficult to determine why someone develops certain religious and political views during their life. This development is dependent on both external and internal factors, the exact

<sup>176</sup> "...op den Bond hoe langer hoe meer een socialistisch stempel wordt gedrukt." Quoted from: [B.D. Eerdmans in:] *Jaarboek NPB 1921*, 19. See also: A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – Van een debat', *De Hervorming* 1920-44 (6 November 1920), 175; B.D. Eerdmans, 'Ingezonden – De inleiding op het jaarverslag', *Ibid.* 1920-45 (13 November 1920), 178-179; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Ingezonden – Aanteekening', *Ibid.* 1920-45 (13 November 1920), 179.

<sup>177</sup> "...steeds meer geïdentificeerd [wordt] met socialisten en communisten. Geen wonder, want [...] de 'roode' predikanten [slaan] maar al te graag de groote trom." Quoted from: J. Frima, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij', *Ibid.* 1923-47 (24 November 1923), 371-372, there 372.

<sup>178</sup> F.C.M. Boenders, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Vereniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen', *Ibid.* 1924-52 (27 December 1924), 413-414; F.C.M. Boenders, 'Vereniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen', *Ibid.* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 52; F.C.M. Boenders, 'Vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen', *Ibid.* 1925-15 (11 April 1925), 114.

<sup>179</sup> "...veel van zijn beste medewerkers en lezers..." Quoted from: H.Y. Groenewegen, "'De Hervorming' 50 jaar", *Ibid.* 1925-50 (12 December 1925), 393-394, there 394.

<sup>180</sup> J. de Louter, 'Oud en nieuw', *Ibid.* 1926-23 (5 June 1926), 177-178, there 178.

<sup>181</sup> E.g.: S.K. Bakker, 'Afscheiding?', *Ibid.* 1907-25 (22 June 1907), 194-196; H.A.J. van Wijhe, 'Ingezonden stukken – Een nieuwe antithese?', *Ibid.* 1908-45 (7 November 1908), 358-359; G. Horreüs de Haas, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – De arbeiderswereld, de religie en de kerk', *Ibid.* 1921-06 (12 February 1921), 44-46, there 44.

<sup>182</sup> E.g.: H.P. Schim van der Loeff, 'De Commissie voor de Geschriften', *Ibid.* 1907-27 (6 July 1907), 211-212, there 212; G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, 'Redelijke godsdienstprediking', *Ibid.* 1908-19 (9 May 1908), 146-147, there 147; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Onkerkelijk of ongodsdienstig?', *Ibid.* 1917-09 (3 March 1917), 70; H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Om de ziel der arbeiders', *Ibid.* 1921-20 (21 May 1921), 155-157, there 155.



composition of which is different for every individual. Yet, solely looking at the modernist movement itself, four reasons can be discerned that explain why the working-class element continued to be underrepresented in the modernist movement in spite of the rise of a politically socialist current within it.

First, due to the anti-religious, anti-modernist, materialistic and revolutionary language Domela Nieuwenhuis and other socialist opinion leaders, particularly before 1900, integrated into their socialist message, and due to the identification of political liberalism, the ‘guardian’ of capitalism, with religious modernism, a negative image of the modernist movement had firmly planted itself in working-class circles.<sup>183</sup>

Second, this image persisted and was hard to get rid of all the more since leading modernist opinion makers (had) kept up this image themselves by distancing themselves from the labour movement in general, and political socialism in particular for a long time. Judging by the oratory and style of men such as Domela, they regarded socialism to be vulgar, unethical, atheistic, and a threat to personal development. Hence, in turn, a negative image of socialism persisted in the modernist movement.

Third, the number of modernists who came to embrace political socialism was too small to change either of these images. The fear that the modernist movement turned ‘red’ was, numerically speaking, unfounded. It might have *seemed* as if modernists with politically socialist leanings began to outnumber those with politically liberal leanings, because the former expressed their political conviction more clearly and more loudly than the latter. If they had been successful, initiatives of socialist modernists to enlarge the working-class element in their movement, such as ‘labour churches’ and ‘religious socialist worship meetings’, would not have reduced the aforementioned gap, as they would have not fully *integrated* labourers into the modernist movement. Envisioned or organised *next* to regular church services, these initiatives would instead have put blue-collar workers in a separate class-based ‘compartment’.<sup>184</sup> Moreover, instead of making the modernist movement more ‘proletarian’, modernist ministers who joined the SDAP actually contributed to a ‘reorientation’ process in the party, causing it to acknowledge that socialism had an ethical rather than a materialistic basis, and culminating in the 1930s in Banning’s influential ‘cultural socialism’.<sup>185</sup>

Fourth, and last, there was no (spiritual) necessity for blue-collar workers to join the modernist movement. The Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants among them professed a religion based on a notion of exclusive salvation: only by staying in the church and by organising their lives in accordance with the principles of their religion would they preserve the prospect of attaining redemption. Because their loyalty towards their own religious community was therefore, on the whole, bigger than their solidarity with labourers outside of their religious

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<sup>183</sup> As social democrat Bakker related, Domela, “a total renegade” (“...een volslagen renegaat...”), made people think that socialism and unbelief were two sides of the same coin. See: S.K. Bakker, *Het christen-socialisme* (Baarn 1909), 25-26. The identification of modernism with liberalism among labourers is, for example, mentioned in: [J.T. Tenthoff in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De Noord-Hollandsche Predikantenvereeniging’, *De Hervorming* 1909-27 (3 July 1909), 213-214, there 213.

<sup>184</sup> Fully in accordance with the ethics implied in the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors, the Religious Socialist League wanted to give ‘ethical guidance’ to labourers. See: C. van der Pol, ‘Godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven – Naar aanleiding van “een moeilijk vraagstuk”’, *Ibid.* 1924-28 (12 July 1924), 219-220, there 220.

<sup>185</sup> F. de Jong Edz., “*Wij willen ellende wenden.*” *Een eeuw sociaal-demokratische antwoorden op maatschappelijke uitdagingen* (Amsterdam 1984), 45.

community, Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants were, admonished by their religious leaders, loath to join the SDAP or socialist unions.<sup>186</sup> But this did not apply to blue-collar workers who were neither Roman Catholic nor orthodox Protestant. For them, socialism *itself* functioned as a ‘substitute’ for religion,<sup>187</sup> as an all-encompassing world view and outlook on life that could do without liberal Protestant conceptions of faith.<sup>188</sup>

Although the lack of appeal of the modernist movement was mostly regretted, some modernists interpreted it as a confirmation of the ‘superiority’ of liberal Protestantism. At the meeting of modern ministers in the northern provinces of 1916, J.J. Bleeker defended that

the relative impopularity of the modernist movement [...] is absolutely no proof of [its] religious inferiority. In most cases, its lack of success with the masses rather is a sign of the contrary. It is the fault of many that people judge the value of a [religious] movement too much by exterior things, primarily by the frequency with which its adherents attend church. The more modernism will do justice to religion in its purest form, the more popular it will probably not become, but the power and blessing it emanates will become bigger.<sup>189</sup>

In 1931, D. Drijver affirmed this: “the more our Protestantism wants to be purely spiritual, the less it will be able to attract the general public.”<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> In 1918, the Dutch bishops proclaimed that if Roman Catholics joined a socialist or communist organisation, they would risk no longer receiving sacraments. From a Catholic perspective, this meant being excluded from the necessary means to preserve salvation. Two years later, the synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands stated that neo-Calvinists did not belong in an organisation based on the theory of the class struggle. See: G.J. Harmsen and B. Reinalda, *Voor de bevrijding van de arbeid. Beknopte geschiedenis van de Nederlandse vakbeweging* (Nijmegen 1975), 328; A. Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek* (Amsterdam [1968] 2007), 49.

<sup>187</sup> Kruijt, *De onkerkelijkheid in Nederland*, 190-191; A.J.C. Rüter, *De spoorwegstakingen van 1903. Een spiegel der arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* (Leiden 1935), 22-27.

<sup>188</sup> Exemplary in this respect is J.A. Fortuijn’s exclamation, uttered during a public discussion with minister W. Bax in 1890, that modernism was something socialists could do without, as it was utterly useless to them. See: [J.A. Fortuijn in:] ‘Binnenland’, *Recht voor Allen* XII.303 (25 December 1890), 2.

<sup>189</sup> “De betrekkelijke impopulariteit der Moderne Richting [...] is volstrekt niet een bewijs van de godsdienstige minderwaardigheid onzer richting. In vele gevallen is het minder groote succes bij de massa eerder een aanwijzing van het tegendeel. De fout van velen is, dat men de waarde van een richting veel te veel te afmeet naar uitwendige dingen, voornamelijk naar het meer of minder trouw kerkgaan harer aanhangers. Hoe meer het Modernisme het echt-religieuze tot zijn recht laat komen, des te grooter zal wel niet zijn populariteit worden, maar wel de kracht en zegen, die ervan uitgaat.” Quoted from: [J.J. Bleeker in:] ‘Redactioneel – Samenkomst van moderne predikanten in de drie noordelijke provinciën’, *De Hervorming* 1916-36 (2 September 1916), 308. See also: J.J. Bleeker, ‘De betrekkelijke impopulariteit der moderne richting’, *Teekenen des Tijds* XIX (1917), 118-138.

<sup>190</sup> “Hoe meer ons Protestantisme zuiver geestelijk wil zijn, hoe minder het het groote publiek zal trekken.” Quoted from: D. Drijver, ‘Binnenland – Waar ligt de oorzaak?’, *De Hervorming* 1931-05 (9 May 1931), 33.



## 8. CAPTIVATING THE INTELLECTUAL CLASS

### 1. A Bourgeois Movement

In Boston in 1907, during the fourth in a series of international congresses of religious liberals with which chapter 11 deals in more detail, Remonstrant theologian H.Y. Groenewegen gave a short speech on the condition and perspectives of liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands. Due to an alliance of orthodox, primarily Kuyperian, Calvinists and Roman Catholics that was as “monstrous” as it was “powerful,” a false antithesis between self-proclaimed ‘true’ Christians on the one hand, and those whom these Christians branded ‘heathens’ on the other, had come to divide Dutch society and politics. Nearly half of the population, Groenewegen contended, was susceptible to this antithetical rhetoric and ranked itself among the ‘true’ Christians. Yet, this did not mean that the other half of the population, the ‘heathens’ in orthodox Calvinist and Catholic parlance, was susceptible to liberal Protestantism. Those having a leading position within this half and thus being able to influence public opinion, did not actively support the modernist movement in challenging orthodox Calvinists’ and Roman Catholics’ antithetical rhetoric, Groenewegen noticed with regret. Among liberal politicians and public school teachers, he felt that an indifferent or even hostile attitude towards religion prevailed. As chapter 9 shows, Groenewegen was certainly not alone in this feeling. Moreover, he lectured,

among our most important artists, poets, and prose writers, there are many who do not hesitate to express their religious thoughts and feelings, and most of these are far from any orthodoxy. But very few of them show sympathy with us, strive after nearer relations with our ministers and scholars, or appear in our churches, even when our best preachers, who are artists in their way, are in the pulpit.<sup>1</sup>

Though not orthodox, the trendsetters in the so-called ‘intellectual’ or ‘cultured’ class were thus not very favourably disposed towards the modernist movement either. The question is: why?

In the late 1850s and 1860s, when their movement was just beginning to take shape, modernists had no doubt whatsoever that the modernist movement would gain a firm foothold in the cultured class, among those to whom they later referred as ‘intellectuals’.<sup>2</sup> However, as

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from: H.Y. Groenewegen, ‘Conditions and Outlook of Liberal Religions in Holland’, in: C.W. Wendte (ed.), *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion. Proceedings and Papers of the Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals* (Boston s.a.), 165-171, there 165-167.

<sup>2</sup> This is not to say that there were no modernist-minded intellectuals – modern theologians and modernist ministers, for example, belonged to the group of intellectuals. Yet, here and elsewhere, in accordance with the way in which it was used in the modernist movement, the term ‘intellectuals’ refers to non-modernists. Aerts differentiates two meanings of the term ‘intellectuals’. It can refer to all people who have studied at a university and who have a profession for which such a university education is required. It can also refer to a narrower group of people who, often though not necessarily having an academic degree, actively take part in public debate out of a ‘vocation’ to act as the critical conscience of society. The ‘intellectual’ in this narrow sense, of which French publicist Émile Zola (1840-1902) is the archetype, developed in the *fin-de-siècle* era. To those who actively participated in public debate before 1880, Aerts refers with the terms ‘*burgerlijke intellectuelen*’ (‘bourgeois intellectuals’), ‘*nationale opvoeders*’ (‘national educators’) or ‘*letterheren*’ (‘men of letters’). One crucial difference between Zola-style intellectuals and the older bourgeois intellectuals is that the latter tried to improve bourgeois culture without rejecting it as such. The term ‘intellectuals’ only came into use in Dutch after 1890. Beforehand, the term ‘*letterkundigen*’ (which can best be translated as ‘masters of arts’) was used to refer to all people with a university education, and the term ‘*de beschaafde stand*’ (‘the cultured class’) was used to refer to the larger group of people, more or less coinciding with the (higher) bourgeoisie, who were in a position to inform themselves about what was going on in intellectual life. See: R.A.M. Aerts, ‘Bevoegde autoriteiten. Burgerlijke intellectuelen in de negentiende eeuw: een groepsportret’, *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXII.1 (1998), 72-95, there 73-74 and 86-87. In the modernist press, the term ‘*intellectueelen*’ was used in both the aforementioned

early as the 1870s, complaints could be heard that intellectuals' interest and involvement in religious life was rather low.<sup>3</sup> From that moment onwards, articles on the relationship between the modernist movement and intellectuals read as an endless jeremiad. In an exemplary article in *De Hervorming* in early 1894, W.C. van Manen disappointingly observed that there was not only "still much dislike of 'modernists' in the circles of the socially and intellectually less fortunate," but also that "the initially, as it seemed to be, exceptionally ardent and unanimous [affection] among the most highly developed [people] for the modernist movement and the enlightenment it set in motion is flagging in a worrying way."<sup>4</sup> There is something interesting about Van Manen's article: it illustrates a trend that would intensify in the decades to come. Whereas the decreasing interest of intellectuals in the modernist movement had been recognised before,<sup>5</sup> it more and more came to be bracketed together with the lack of low-class support for the modernist movement towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Simultaneously, modernists began to devise plans to recover intellectuals' interest in their movement. In 1907, an anonymous article writer in *De Hervorming* even advised the NPB to no longer try to get a stronger position in the low classes by seeking alliance with the socialist labour movement, but to "win over the so-called trendsetters of the nation to liberal Christianity" instead. After all, although the modernist movement was concerned about "the entire nation," it was ultimately always "the tail that follows, with only a few exceptions, the path, the direction that the head is taking."<sup>7</sup> In other

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broad and narrow senses. This chapter deals with intellectuals in the narrow (bourgeois and Zola-style) sense: those individuals who tried to influence public opinion and whose ideas reached the entire 'cultured class'.

<sup>3</sup> E.g.: Zaalberg, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond*, 5-7; 'Volharden', *De Hervorming* 1878-35 (31 August 1878), 1. Also stated in: [P. Eldering], 'Redactioneel – Openingswoord van den voorzitter der moderne vergadering', *Ibid.* 1916-20 (13 May 1916), 167-168, there 168.

<sup>4</sup> "...in de kringen der maatschappelijk en verstandelijk minder bevoorrechten [bestaat] nog altijd veel afkeer van 'modernen'..." ; "De liefde, de aanvankelijk naar het scheen zoo zeldzaam warme en eenstemmige onder de hoogst ontwikkelde, voor de Nieuwe Rikting en het licht door haar ontstoken, reeds op bedenkelijke wijze aan het kwijnen." Quoted from: W.C. van Manen, '1869 – Januari – 1894', *Ibid.* 1894-04 (27 January 1894), 14-15, there 14.

<sup>5</sup> E.g.: 'Volharden', *Ibid.* 1878-35 (31 August 1878), 1; [L.W.E. Rauwenhoff in:] S. Cramer, 'Wat in maart gebeurt', *Ibid.* 1880-13 (27 March 1880), 50; [J.J. van Hille in:] J. de Louter, 'Eene ernstige vraag', *Ibid.* 1887-52 (24 December 1887), 206.

<sup>6</sup> E.g.: [M.J. Mees in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – L. Vrouwe-Parochie', *Ibid.* 1878-49 (7 December 1878), 2; Zaalberg, *Realisme of idealisme zonder ideaal?*, 16; [I. van den Bergh in:] 'Binnenland – De algemeene vergadering', *De Hervorming* 1891-46 (14 November 1891), 181-182, there 181; J.A. Helper Sesbrugger, 'Tweeërlei oordeel over den godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1892-05 (30 January 1892), 18; Een vrijzinnige, 'Over vrijzinnig Christendom in Nederland', *Ibid.* 1907-14 (6 April 1907), 105-107, there 106; H.P. Schim van der Loeff, 'De Commissie voor de Geschriften', *Ibid.* 1907-27 (6 July 1907), 211-212, there 212; E.M. ten Cate, 'Door de woestijn', *Ibid.* 1907-29 (20 July 1907), 225-226, there 225; [H.Y. Groenewegen in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Buitenland', *Ibid.* 1907-44 (2 November 1907), 349-350, there 350; G.A. van den Bergh van Eysinga, 'Redelijke godsdienstprediking', *Ibid.* 1908-19 (9 May 1908), 146-147, there 147; F. Dijkema, 'Verandering in onze godsdienstprediking?', *Ibid.* 1914-09 (28 February 1914), 71; [P. Eldering], 'Redactioneel – Openingswoord van den voorzitter der moderne vergadering', *Ibid.* 1916-20 (13 May 1916), 167-168, there 168; J.J. Bleeker, 'Hoofdartikelen – Wat mankeert er toch aan ons?', *Ibid.* 1917-04 (27 January 1917), 27-28, there 27; 1917-05 (3 February 1917), 35-36; H. Oort, 'Hoofdartikelen – De waarde van het geloof in God', *Ibid.* 1917-11 (17 March 1917), 86-87, there 86; W.J. Boelman, 'Hoofdartikelen – De mensch gelijk hij schijnt en gelijk hij is', *Ibid.* 1917-21 (26 May 1917), 170-171, there 170; K. Vos, 'Ingezonden – Teekenen des tijds', *Ibid.* 1917-50 (15 December 1917), 419-420, there 419; A.C. Schade van Westrum, 'Kerkelijk leven – De studenten en de kerk', *Ibid.* 1918-39 (28 September 1918), 154.

<sup>7</sup> "Nu is 't om heel het volk te doen, maar de staart gaat steeds, op een heel enkele uitzondering na, den weg, de richting op van den kop. De z.g. toonaangevers van de natie dienen 't eerst veranderd, bekeerd, gewonnen voor 't vrijzinnig Christendom." Quoted from: Een vrijzinnige, 'Over vrijzinnig Christendom in Nederland', *Ibid.* 1907-14 (6 April 1907), 105-107, there 106. The writer identified himself as the author of a small booklet, titled 'Aan wie de schuld, zoo Rome en Dordt spoedig weer zegevieren?', published in Leeuwarden in 1906. He signed both this booklet and the article in *De Hervorming* as "een vrijzinnige" ("a liberal").

words, if the NPB really wanted to be socially relevant, it should target those who set the pace in intellectual life. After much debate, the NPB picked up this suggestion ten years later. As of 1918, *De Hervorming* would primarily target the university-trained elite in an attempt to influence intellectual life. However, as related in chapter 2, this attempt utterly failed: the gap between intellectuals and modernists had simply become too big to be bridged.<sup>8</sup>

Because the modernist movement did not manage to attract a large following in the lower classes and in the intellectual-cultural ‘upper’ class, it continued to rely on bourgeois support.<sup>9</sup> Modernists recognised and deplored this, yet struggled to make sense of it.<sup>10</sup> Groenewegen, for example, attributed the lack of intellectuals in modernist ranks to intellectuals themselves: in his 1907 Boston speech, he suggested that intellectuals did not bother to seek contact with modernist ministers and scholars. In 1926, Pl. van den Berg reasoned along similar lines: intellectuals haughtily looked down upon everything ‘bourgeois’ and therefore thought themselves to be ‘too good’ to join the bourgeois NPB.<sup>11</sup> In these explanations, self-criticism is entirely absent and potential causes of the unpopularity of liberal Protestantism itself are ignored. Historians Harinck and Winkeler do look for such a cause. They argue that, although it hoped to stop the broadening gap between Christianity and modern culture, the modernist movement alienated the intellectual class from church life precisely by emphasizing that such a gap existed.<sup>12</sup> This explanation fits the paradigm that modernism was a transitional phase between involvement in church life and church abandonment or even irreligion. It implies that intellectuals used to docilely comply with orthodoxy before the genesis of the modernist movement. Yet, dogmatic moderateness was not a phenomenon that only came into existence in the nineteenth century. Another explanation is therefore needed. Instead of estranging intellectuals due to its uncovering of a large gap between Christianity and modern culture, the modernist movement was rather unable to preserve a strong position in intellectual circles because it was unable to bridge this gap and, even more importantly, because it actually maintained and widened this gap. As this

<sup>8</sup> Hulsman’s claim, published in a 1929 article in *De Stroom*, that the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, the Remonstrant Brotherhood, Mennonite congregations and several NPB branches still enjoyed the interest of “many intellectuals” was based on wishful thinking rather than on reality – it was in flagrant contradiction to the large amount of articles in which the opposite was put forward. Yet, only several sentences later, even Hulsman could not deny that the modernist movement, taken as a whole, lacked the strong position among intellectuals that it wanted to have – after all, liberals in the Dutch Reformed Church, by far the largest ecclesial group within the modernist movement, had alienated themselves from intellectuals due to their ideal of the *volkskerk*. While Reformed liberals tried to permeate the lower classes with a liberal Protestant spirit through the institution of the Dutch Reformed Church, intellectuals, according to Hulsman, did not bother to reach out to the masses – because they felt that every attempt to uplift the masses was a waste of effort – and disliked tradition-bound church life. He suggested that Dutch Reformed modernists lacked the support of intellectuals that other modernist groups did have – as such contrasting the *volkskerk* with the more congregationalist organisation of the Remonstrants, Mennonites and the NPB. Identifying the former with traditional ecclesial practices and seeing the latter as voluntary associations, Hulsman did not acknowledge that the ‘ecclesial turn’ manifested itself outside of the circle of Reformed modernists as well. See: G. Hulsman, ‘De intellectueelen en de kerk’, *De Stroom* VIII.36 (10 August 1929), 2-3, there 2.

<sup>9</sup> [F. Kuiper in:] ‘Godsdienst en stand’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIV.324 (23 November 1927), morning paper B, 2; Noordhoff, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme en onkerkelijkheid*, 32; Hoenderdaal, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen’, 169.

<sup>10</sup> E.g.: C.E. Hooykaas, ‘Godsdienstig leven in Nederland CCXX. Expansie in den Protestantenvond’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XC.28963 (7 November 1917), evening paper, 5; K. Vos, ‘Ingezonden – Teekenen des tijds’, *De Hervorming* 1917-50 (15 December 1917), 419-420; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Gesteldheden en verwachtingen betreffende het vrijzinnig protestantisme’, *De Smidse* VIII.7/8 (July/August 1933), 193-205, there 197.

<sup>11</sup> Pl. van den Berg, ‘Ingezonden – Enquête over gemeentelieven’, *De Hervorming* 1926-25 (19 June 1926), 197.

<sup>12</sup> Harinck and Winkeler, ‘De negentiende eeuw’, 671-673.

chapter substantiates, modernist discourse and the stands to which it led were responsible for the inability of the modernist movement to safeguard the continued interest of intellectuals.

## 2. Modernism in Intellectual Life

Within the cultured class, publicists were the ones who left the strongest stamp on public opinion. Significantly, most modernist ministers who resigned their ministerial position began to entirely devote themselves to letters.<sup>13</sup> Some of them, such as M.A.N. Rovers, who gave up his position as Dutch Reformed minister in 1878 because of irreconcilable grievances against existing church life,<sup>14</sup> and J.A. Tours, who stepped down from ministry in 1883 due to doubts about the immortality of the soul,<sup>15</sup> continued to sympathise with the modernist movement. The same went for ministers as A.E.F. Junod, who disappointedly left the Lutheran Church in 1919 during a second ‘wave’ of modernist abdications.<sup>16</sup> Others, however, began to manifest themselves as modernism’s fiercest critics. Two of them, who permanently retired from ministerial office in the early 1860s, were among the most important and most influential opinion formers of the last half of the nineteenth century: A. Pierson and C. Busken Huet.<sup>17</sup> Similarly to F. Domela Nieuwenhuis, the ex-modernist minister who was in large part responsible for the negative stereotyping of modernists in the socialist movement, former modernist ministers Pierson and Busken Huet contributed to giving modernism a bad name in intellectual, literary circles.

In her 2007 dissertation, Buitenwerf-van der Molen emphasises the significance of Pierson’s and Busken Huet’s transition from the pulpit to the writing table. Their career switch had severe consequences for the further development of the modernist movement. It was not only a powerful weapon in the hands of orthodoxy, which was strengthened in its conviction that modernism inevitably led to unbelief; Pierson and Busken Huet themselves also took up arms against their former fellow modernists. In essence, they accused modernists of being dishonest to themselves: Pierson and Busken Huet had both come to understand that the ultimate consequence of modernism should be a clean break with the church and Christianity.<sup>18</sup>

Years after his abdication, Pierson began to look at orthodoxy with a certain endearment, of which he gave evidence in a series of articles published under the title ‘Oudere Tijdgenooten’ (‘Older Contemporaries’) in the influential literary journal *De Gids* (*The Guide*) between 1882 and 1886.<sup>19</sup> In this last year, briefly after the outbreak of the *Doleantie*, he even wrote an article in *De Gids* in which he praised the Kuypertian movement for its ecclesial activities, to the amazement of *De Hervorming*.<sup>20</sup> His critique on the modernist movement, by contrast, did not

<sup>13</sup> Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 77, note 3.

<sup>14</sup> Rovers explained his abdication in: *Gedachtenis. Eerste en laatste toespraak, gehouden te Krommenie op 16 September 1877 en 3 November 1878* (Krommenie 1878).

<sup>15</sup> Tours justified his abdication in: *Twee toespraken, ter rechtvaardiging van het nederleggen zijner betrekking*.

<sup>16</sup> A small report on Junod’s motivation to leave the Lutheran Church is given in: ‘Kerknieuws – Afscheid ds. Junod’, *De Telegraaf* XXVII.10611 (30 September 1919), evening paper, 10.

<sup>17</sup> C.G.N. de Voos, *Allard Pierson naast en tegenover Conrad Busken Huet* (Groningen and Batavia 1941), 3, 34.

<sup>18</sup> Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 77-93.

<sup>19</sup> A. Pierson, *Oudere tijdgenooten IV*. *Bilderdijs, een der vaders van het Réveil*, *De Gids* L (1886), 397-453, there 438-440; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Dr. A. Pierson en – dr. A. Pierson’, *De Hervorming* 1886-12 (20 March 1886), 47. Pierson praised the Kuypertian movement for its concern for the church. In the 1870s, he had come to appreciate the church as an institution for popular edification. See: C. Molenberg, ‘Het allerheiligst ongelooft. Allard

<sup>20</sup> A. Pierson, ‘Oudere tijdgenooten IV. Bilderdijs, een der vaders van het Réveil’, *De Gids* L (1886), 397-453, there 438-440; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Dr. A. Pierson en – dr. A. Pierson’, *De Hervorming* 1886-12 (20 March 1886), 47. Pierson praised the Kuypertian movement for its concern for the church. In the 1870s, he had come to appreciate the church as an institution for popular edification. See: C. Molenberg, ‘Het allerheiligst ongelooft. Allard

fundamentally change since the publication of his book *De moderne richting en de kristelijke kerk* (*The Modernist Movement and the Christian Church*) in 1866. In this study, which was part of a pamphlet war following his abdication, Pierson accused A. Réville, and all modernists with him, of clinging to the church while wanting to destroy everything that separates a church from any given voluntary association.<sup>21</sup> The church had been founded on a supernaturalist basis, which modernists explicitly rejected. Specifically speaking about the Dutch Reformed Church, Pierson implied that orthodox had the right to lay claim to this ecclesial body, as they “generally adhere to the world view on which the Dutch Reformed Church has initially been founded.”<sup>22</sup> Moreover, Jesus himself had been a supernaturalist.<sup>23</sup> The prolonged ecclesial ‘cohabitation’ of supernaturalist orthodox and anti-supernaturalist modernists could not be justified on epistemological grounds and was detrimental to the development of both. Since, according to Pierson, antisupernaturalism did not correspond with the philosophy of life of the Nazarene in whose footsteps modernists wanted to follow, the latter could only maintain their pretention of being a Christian and ecclesial movement by being unfaithful to Jesus and dishonest to themselves.<sup>24</sup>

There is much more to say about the development of Pierson’s thoughts and career as a publicist after the issuing of *De moderne richting en de kristelijke kerk*. Although he could no longer call himself a Christian, he began to show more and more signs of emotional attachment to the devotional side of Christianity, particularly in its mildly pietistic form.<sup>25</sup> He continued to blame modernists for being inconsistent and insincere by paying lip service to Christian ideas and practices while actually ‘subverting’ historical Christianity. Modernism could only be legitimised and defended, Pierson insisted, by means of mental leaps. He elaborately substantiated this in *Gods wondermacht en ons geestelijk leven* (*God’s Miraculous Power and Our Spiritual Life*), published in 1867. His critique that the ultimate justification of religious belief could not, as modernists had contended so far, be based on logic or empiricism,<sup>26</sup> met with some response

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Pierson tussen moderne theologie en humanisme’, in: P.H.J.M. Derkx et al. (ed.), *Voor menselijkheid of tegen gods-dienst? Humanisme in Nederland, 1850-1960* (Hilversum 1998), 51-58, there 62.

<sup>21</sup> Pierson’s book was a direct response to: Réville, *Nous maintiendrons* [also published as: *Wij blijven. Brief aan dr. A. Pierson, naar aanleiding van zijn schrijven “Aan zijne laatste gemeente”* (Arnhem 1865)]. Réville’s book had been a response to: A. Pierson, *Aan zijne laatste gemeente* (Arnhem 1865). The publication of Pierson’s *De moderne richting en de kristelijke kerk* was followed by: A. Réville, *Notre foi et notre droit. Un dernier mot en réponse à M. le dr. Pierson* (Arnhem 1866) [also published as: *Ons geloof en ons regt. Een laatste woord ter beantwoording van dr. A. Pierson* (Arnhem 1866)]; C. Busken Huet, *Ongevraagd advies, in de zaak van Pierson tegen Réville c.s.* (Haarlem 1866); Kuenen, *Het goed recht der modernen*; Jan Rap, *Heeft Pierson gelijk? Eene vraag tot de aanhangers der moderne theologie gericht* (’s-Hertogenbosch 1866); A. Pierson, *Gods wondermacht en ons geestelijk leven* (Arnhem 1867); R.J. Jungius, *De zedelijke bestemming van het individu, naar aanleiding van dr. Pierson’s laatste brochure “Gods wondermacht en ons geestelijk leven”* (Doesburg 1867); Scholten, *Supranaturalisme in verband met Bijbel, Christendom en protestantisme*. The dispute between Pierson and modernists became part of a larger debate on modernism between liberal and orthodox Protestants after the publication of: Cramer, *De illusie der moderne richting* (1867).

<sup>22</sup> “...in het algemeen de wereldbeschouwing zijn toegedaan waarop de Hervormde kerk oorspronkelijk is gesticht.” Quoted from: Pierson, *De moderne richting en de kristelijke kerk*, 31.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 50-53.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 63-68.

<sup>25</sup> Trapman, *Het land van Erasmus*, 101.

<sup>26</sup> Pierson summarised his argument as follows: “The mortal contradiction in the main dogma of modernist theology is this: God is Father [and] Sovereign, two concepts that exclude each other.” (“*De doodelijke tegenspraak in het hoofddogma der moderne theologie is derhalve deze: God is Vader-Souverein, twee begrippen die elkander uitsluiten.*”) Quoted from: Pierson, *Gods wondermacht en ons geestelijk leven*, 89.



and contributed to the rise of short-lived ‘ethical modernism’.<sup>27</sup> However, he did not sympathise with this current in any way whatsoever – the mutual alienation between Pierson and the modernist movement was permanent.<sup>28</sup> One of the best examples thereof is the dispute that Pierson and Kuenen fought out with each other in the *Theologisch Tijdschrift* in 1876. The immediate cause of this dispute was the publication of *Eene levensbeschouwing* (*A Philosophy of Life*), in which Pierson called himself an ‘abstentionist’, someone who finds religious inspiration in human life itself while leaving theological questions unanswered.<sup>29</sup> Kuenen chided Pierson for identifying true Christianity with the pietistic “exaggeration” of Christianity in which he was raised, thereby doing injustice to a modernist understanding of religion.<sup>30</sup> The latter, in turn, accused modernists such as Kuenen of reacting to his ‘abstentionism’ in the same angst-ridden way as orthodox men such as I. da Costa (1798-1860) had reacted twenty years ago to the rise of modernism. Whereas Da Costa had wanted to protect the verbatim word of Scripture against historical-critical research, Kuenen now echoed Da Costa by pouring out the vials of his wrath over everyone who criticised the existence of a higher force or principle in nature.<sup>31</sup>

During the controversy following his abdication, Pierson received public support from Conrad Busken Huet. In a brochure titled ‘*Ongevraagd advies*’ (‘*Unasked-for Advice*’), which historian Trapman calls “a radical denunciation of modern theology as such,”<sup>32</sup> Huet characterised modernists as hypocrites. His criticism was basically the same as Pierson’s, but the words he used were so harsh that even Pierson was shocked.<sup>33</sup> If modernists were honest, Huet explained, they could not but acknowledge that they did not deserve to be in the church and neither to call themselves ‘Christians’. Their aspiration to have a position between freethinkers and the orthodox faithful was only possible with a sanctimonious and deceitful word play: clinging to while actually reformulating Christian terminology. That, Huet argued, did not serve progress. A thorough reformation of church life would therefore not be brought about by modernists, despite the latter’s rhetoric.<sup>34</sup>

Busken Huet illustrated his argument by naming and shaming. Réville, who had been the first to take up the gauntlet against Pierson, failed to see that the way in which modernists tried to harmonise ‘believing’ and ‘knowing’ could ultimately only result in a subordination of faith to reason or a subordination of reason to faith.<sup>35</sup> Kuenen, who had stated that a firm belief in God, Jesus Christ, the Gospel of God’s grace in Christ, and the principle of the freedom of investigation was a prerequisite to being a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church, exemplified the inaccuracy of modernism: his views on ‘God’, ‘Jesus Christ’ and the ‘Gospel’ were

<sup>27</sup> Roessingh, *De moderne theologie in Nederland*, 205. Roessingh says here that *Gods wondermacht en ons geestelijk leven* “struck home, [it] was an event.” (“...sloeg in, was een evenement.”)

<sup>28</sup> However, in the late 1880s and early 1890s, Pierson did occasionally lecture in the Free Congregation.

<sup>29</sup> K.H. Boersema, *Allard Pierson. Eene cultuur-historische studie* (The Hague 1924), 263-292; A.L. Molendijk, ‘De levensbeschouwing van Allard Pierson’, *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* LXV.1 (2011), 18-36.

<sup>30</sup> “...overdrijving...” Quoted from: A. Kuenen, ‘Ideaalvorming’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* X (1876), 316-361, there 347.

<sup>31</sup> A. Pierson, ‘Kantteekeningen op Prof. Kuenen’s “Ideaalvorming”’, *Ibid.* X (1876), 404-468, there 459-461.

<sup>32</sup> “...een radicale afrekening met de moderne theologie als zodanig.” Quoted from: Pierson (Trapman ed.), *Tussen religieus gevoel en kritisch denken*, 31.

<sup>33</sup> S.A. Naber, *Allard Pierson herdacht* (Haarlem 1897), 63-66; O.J. Praamstra, *Busken Huet. Een biografie* (Amsterdam 2007), 404.

<sup>34</sup> Busken Huet, *Ongevraagd advies*, 65-66, 74-76.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-33.

diametrically opposed to the dogmatic fundamentals of the Dutch Reformed Church, whereas, according to Huet, the freedom of investigation had been acquired in spite of, rather than thanks to, ecclesial Protestantism.<sup>36</sup> Rauwenhoff, whom Busken Huet described as vain and attacked with more vehemence than all other modernists, was “insipid,” because he recognised the absurdity of state-subsidised theological faculties that exclusively trained ministers for the Dutch Reformed Church, but refused to draw the only obvious conclusion in this matter: instead of abandoning his chair at the theological faculty in Leiden, Rauwenhoff “confines himself to uttering and recommending pious wishes, and quietly awaits whether these wishes might be fulfilled.”<sup>37</sup> Scholten, among whose audience Busken Huet had been as a student, deluded himself by pretending to be a true disciple of John Calvin: his redefinition of Calvinist concepts was nothing less than “a violation of historical truth.”<sup>38</sup> In sum, whereas Pierson was open-minded enough to further develop his ideas and had showed character by leaving the church, his modernist adversaries were unwilling to critically reconsider their convictions and could only stay in the church at the expense of truth and sincerity.<sup>39</sup>

Modernists were furious,<sup>40</sup> which strengthened Busken Huet in his opinion that they were just as ‘orthodox’ – that is, indisposed to be self-critical – in their persuasion as those against whom modernists positioned themselves. Huet, who did not stay as involved with theology as Pierson, criticised modernism once again in an 1880 short story, albeit considerably less harsh and in a less direct way than in his *Ongevraagd advies*.<sup>41</sup> Looking back upon his first years in a rural village, the protagonist of this story, a modernist minister, acknowledges that his liberal religious views and the way in which he had propagated these had been too incomprehensible for his peasant congregation. Feeling that he would have fitted better in an urban congregation, where he would have found “an audience of more developed people, of women and men who, just as myself, saw the reconciliation of Christianity and civilisation as the most important issue of the century and modern theology as the providential solution thereof,” he therefore decided to target the small circle of village dignitaries, who belonged to the same social class as he did.<sup>42</sup> By putting these statements in the mouth of his story’s protagonist, Huet implicitly blamed the early modernist movement for the pretentiousness and complacency with which it had made its appearance, and for its inability and lack of serious effort to make itself clear enough to win over the faithful to its ideas.<sup>43</sup>

E.J. Potgieter (1808-1875), one of Busken Huet’s closest friends, completely agreed with what Busken Huet wrote in his *Ongevraagd advies*. Potgieter was one of the founding

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-51.

<sup>37</sup> “...karakterloosheid...”; “...bepaalt hij zich tot het uiten en aanbevelen van wenschen, en wacht overbescheiden, of die wenschen wellicht vervuld mogen worden.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 51-55.

<sup>38</sup> “...schennis der historische waarheid...” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 55-62.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 51, 62-63.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 33, 77.

<sup>41</sup> C. Busken Huet, ‘Een modern predikant. Herinneringen van ds. Leopold’, *Nederland* XXXII.3 (1880), 111-138, 249-275, 378-417.

<sup>42</sup> “...een gehoor van meer ontwikkelden; van vrouwen en mannen, die met mij de verzoening van christendom en beschaving als het groote vraagstuk der eeuw beschouwden, en, evenals ik, in de moderne theologie de providentiële oplossing van den dag begroetten.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 270. See also: J.W.J. Versteegen, ‘Deel drie van “De Bruce’s”’, *De Nieuwe Taalgids* LXXV.3 (May 1982), 242-253.

<sup>43</sup> This short story was indeed meant to be a critique of modernism, as Busken Huet explained in a letter to A.L.G. Bosboom-Toussaint (1812-1886). See: *Ibid.*, 252.

fathers of the literary and cultural monthly *De Gids*, which had rapidly become the most influential Dutch periodical after its creation in 1837.<sup>44</sup> As such, he had a leading position in Dutch intellectual life in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century. In the words of Dutch studies scholar C.G.N. de Vooy, Potgieter “had never hidden his abhorrence of modern theology.”<sup>45</sup> Although this abhorrence manifested itself most explicitly in his private letters to Huet,<sup>46</sup> modernists at the time were fully aware of Potgieter’s dislike of their movement – at least, judging from the following words that J.H. Maronier wrote in *De Hervorming* in 1882:

Modern theology [...] ultimately disappointed him. In his opinion, it denied too much before it was even able to decide on something. Its spokesmen were guilty of the same intellectualism and dogmatism for which they rightfully blamed orthodoxy. The theological system [of modernism] was confused with religious life [...]. He therefore turned away from the theological quarrels in disgust and openly expressed this aversion in his writings.<sup>47</sup>

Potgieter blamed modernists for their indecisiveness and for the vagueness of their ill-founded convictions. Compared to the “wavering modernist ministers,” an obscurantist priest, who at least knew what he believed in and who was wholly convinced of the things he preached, even made a favourable impression on him.<sup>48</sup>

Another of Busken Huet’s acquaintances who set his stamp on late nineteenth-century Dutch intellectual life was E. Douwes Dekker (1820-1887), better known under his pen name ‘Multatuli’. Having gained fame with his 1860 publication *Max Havelaar*, a fierce accusation of the economic unscrupulousness of Dutch colonial rule over the East Indies, Multatuli built up an impressive oeuvre in which his distaste for what he perceived as the bourgeois character of Dutch society was a main theme.<sup>49</sup> As part of this ‘crusade’ against middle-class morals, not only Christianity, but particularly *modernist* Protestantism had to take Multatuli’s blows. His most recent biographer, D. van der Meulen, concludes that Multatuli detested modernists more than he did orthodox believers.<sup>50</sup> A clear and early example thereof is given in some of Multatuli’s *Ideën*, a series of seven volumes, comprising 1,282 separate pieces of writing with

<sup>44</sup> Stating, as Aerts does, that *De Gids* became a platform for modern theology after 1858 is only true for the decade immediately succeeding 1858. Particularly Busken Huet and Pierson propagated modern-theological viewpoints in *De Gids*, but stopped doing so after they had left the church. Other modern theologians would continue to occasionally contribute to *De Gids*, but the editorial policy of the magazine was certainly not one of blind support for modernism as of the 1870s. In turn, far from all articles in *De Gids* were applauded in modernist circles. Cf.: Aerts, *De letterheren*, 247-248.

<sup>45</sup> “Potgieter, die zijn afkeer van de moderne theologie nooit verborgen had...” Quoted from: De Vooy, *Conrad Busken Huet*, 95. See also: O. Noordenbos, ‘Romantische nabloei en modernisme in Nederland, ca. 1840-ca. 1885’, in: Van Houtte et al. (eds.), *Algemene geschiedenis der Nederlanden* X, 371-392, there 376.

<sup>46</sup> E.g.: E.J. Potgieter, *De werken* XXII. *Brieven aan Cd. Busken Huet*, 1869 (Haarlem 1902), 186; *De werken* XXIII. *Brieven aan Cd. Busken Huet*, 1870-1874 (Haarlem 1902), 29, 131.

<sup>47</sup> “De moderne theologie [...] hem ten slotte teleurstelde. Zij ontkende hem te veel, voordat zij in staat was iets vast te stellen. Hare woordvoerders maakten zich aan het zelfde intellectualisme en dogmatisme schuldig, dat zij zoo terecht aan de orthodoxie verweten. Het theologisch stelsel werd verward met het godsdienstig leven [...]. Daarom keerde hij zich met weêrzin van den strijd der theologen af en sprak dien afkeer onverholen uit in zijn schriften.” Quoted from: J.H. Maronier, ‘Onze leestafel – Potgieter’, *De Hervorming* 1882-28 (15 July 1882), 112. See also: F.W.F. Nippold, ‘Eene studie over Potgieter’, *De Tijdspiegel* XXIX.2 (1882), 51-103, there 86-91.

<sup>48</sup> “...waggelende moderne dominés...” Quoted from: G.B. Brom, *De dominee in onze literatuur* (Nijmegen and Utrecht [1924]), 46-47.

<sup>49</sup> Te Velde, ‘How High Did the Dutch Fly?’, 77.

<sup>50</sup> D. van der Meulen, *Multatuli. Leven en werk van Eduard Douwes Dekker* (Nijmegen 2002), 461. See also: H. de Veer, *Multatuli (E. Douwes Dekker)* (Haarlem 1888), 140.

diverse forms and on diverse subjects. In *Idee 453* and *454*, Multatuli joined the controversy following modernist Reformed minister J.C. Zaalberg's (1828-1885) public denial of Jesus's physical resurrection and ascension.<sup>51</sup> Modern theologians, Multatuli metaphorically wrote, were like pastry cooks who discovered that their merchandise (sermons) contained toxicants (teachings refuted by science and scholarship) and decided not to close their shops (to step down from the pulpit), but to stuff their pastries with another poison (modern theology).<sup>52</sup> The poisonous character of modernism, he explained, was exemplified by Zaalberg's brochure *De godsdienst van Jezus en de moderne rigting* (*The Religion of Jesus and the Modernist Movement*). Modernist ministers as Zaalberg were half-hearted and insincere by rejecting orthodox views while clothing their own unorthodox views in orthodox terminology. Accepting that the earth has not come into existence in six lots of twenty-four hours, but still narrating that God 'created' reality with 'His hand' was an insult to both science and religion. Moreover, rejecting long-held ideas about God and mankind without questioning religious belief as such was a sign of feebleness: "[Zaalberg's] question: 'Can I not be a believer without believing this... this... this...?' etc. is theological suicide, and the plain 'no!', which should be anyone's answer to that question, is a short but rather powerful funeral oration at the grave of [his] ministerial honesty."<sup>53</sup>

Just as Potgieter, Multatuli preferred the dogmatic believer with a childlike faith, who did not know any better and fully devoted himself to what he regarded as the Truth, over the doubtful and consciously self-deluding modernist. The latter was rightfully sceptical about the biblical narratives, but stopped halfway in his scepticism.<sup>54</sup> He accepted that contemporary science and scholarship induced Christians to revise their world view, but only to a certain extent. Simultaneously, he held on to conventional Christian concepts and practices without realising that these concepts and practices only made sense in the orthodox context he rejected. Harmonising science and faith in a 'middle way', which modernists tried to do, was a fruitless endeavour: such a 'middle way' was non-existent, Multatuli stressed.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, Multatuli blamed modernists for clinging to what he regarded as wrong morals.<sup>56</sup>

Such men of letters as Pierson, Busken Huet, Potgieter and Multatuli have all, in their own way, influenced late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century belletrists.<sup>57</sup> The generation that immediately succeeded them, known as '*de Tachtigers*' ('the Eighties Movement'), vehemently opposed the ethics and teachings of organised Christianity, both in its orthodox and modernist form, in their initially naturalistic writings.<sup>58</sup> Modern theology and the modernist movement might not have been such a preoccupation of the *Tachtigers* as it had been of Pierson and

<sup>51</sup> Written down in: Zaalberg, *De godsdienst van Jezus en de moderne rigting*. Multatuli might have taken Zaalberg as his object of criticism because of personal resentment: Zaalberg had been the catechist of Multatuli's future wife M.F.C. Hamminck Schepel (1839-1930) and had managed to convince her to (as it turned out, temporarily) end her relationship with Multatuli. See: Van der Meulen, *Multatuli*, 466-467; S.A. Pieterse, *De buik van de lezer. Over spreken en schrijven in Multatuli's "Ideën"* (Nijmegen 2008), 162.

<sup>52</sup> Multatuli [E. Douwes Dekker], *Ideën II* (Amsterdam [1864-1865] 1880), 146-148.

<sup>53</sup> "Uw vraag: 'Kan ik geen geloovige zyn zonder te gelooven dat... dat... dat?' enz. is 'n theologische zelfmoord, en 't eenvoudige: neen! dat ieder moet uitspreken op die vraag, is een korte maar vry krachtige lykrede op het graf uwer dominees-eerlykheid." Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 149-180, there 169.

<sup>54</sup> Multatuli, *Ideën I* (Amsterdam [1862] 1879), 353-354; Pieterse, *De buik van de lezer*, 164.

<sup>55</sup> Multatuli, *Ideën I*, 72-73; Pieterse, *De buik van de lezer*, 166.

<sup>56</sup> Multatuli, *Ideën III* (Amsterdam [1870-1871] 1876), 362-364; Pieterse, *De buik van de lezer*, 184.

<sup>57</sup> De Vooys, *Allard Pierson naast en tegenover Conrad Busken Huet*, 3, 34.

<sup>58</sup> Meyer, *Het godsdienstig gehalte*, 7-8; D.J. Bos, "Dienaren des Woords". *Godgeleerden in de negentiende-eeuwse Nederlandse letterkunde*, *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXI.3 (1997), 153-182, there 153-154.

Multatuli, the following examples nonetheless evince that modernism was, on the whole, not looked at very favourably in the Eighties Movement.

The unofficial ‘leader’ of the *Tachtigers*, Willem Kloos (1859-1938), spoke very slightly of modernists in a controversy with P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. When Hugenholtz had still been a Dutch Reformed minister in the mid-1870s, he had been Kloos’s catechist.<sup>59</sup> In an 1891 article in *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente*, he had disqualified the *Tachtigers* as ‘titans’, who railed against religion and morality with youthful recklessness.<sup>60</sup> In response, Kloos accused Hugenholtz of being “foolish” and arrogant. Hugenholtz took it upon himself to philosophise about the inner motives of the Eighties Movement, but he was nothing more than a “vulgariser of stale opinions or whatever looks like opinions.” Because he could only appreciate literature if it explicitly glorified the name of God, he did not recognise that the *Tachtigers* “experience the Big Unknown, the One Absolute, to which [he] devotes his life [and which] he makes repugnant with his unbearable gabble, much deeper, deep within, and give verbal expression to [this experience of the Big Unknown] much purer than he and his colleagues all across the country do.”<sup>61</sup> As long as Hugenholtz was unwilling or unable to acknowledge that the *Tachtigers* were his spiritual superiors, he should be silent, Kloos snarled. Later, near the end of his life, Kloos looked back upon the Sunday services and confirmation classes led by Hugenholtz that he had attended in his youth. He stated to have had high expectations of these services and classes at first, particularly because Hugenholtz had been an esteemed and popular minister in those days. Soon, however, he had become deeply disappointed: Hugenholtz only preached “comforting namby-pambyisms, interspersed with Scriptural passages” in such a “far-fetched or vague and indefinite [way] that I often failed to grasp the drift of his chat.” What had most failed to satisfy Kloos most was that this modernist minister had been unable to give him something to hold on to in his quest for God.<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, Frank van der Goes, writing under the pen name ‘Ph. Hack van Outheusden’, ferociously mocked modernist ministers in an 1888 article in *De Nieuwe Gids* (*The New Guide*), the main platform of the Eighties Movement. He blamed them for preaching a vapid gospel of virtue, sweetness, tranquillity and decency, and for their bourgeois mannerisms: they could be found more often in gentlemen’s clubs than in churches. In conclusion, Van der Goes scornfully judged that “for years, they have not given any other signs of life than an insignificant, semi-amusing, semi-sentimentalist literature, a platitudinous philosophy, a practice of makeshift measures and petty humanism, inartistic and grossly bourgeois aesthetics.”<sup>63</sup> Another *Tachtiger*,

<sup>59</sup> W.J.Th. Kloos (H.G.M. Prick ed.), *Zelfportret* (Amsterdam 1986), 15.

<sup>60</sup> P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘De mystiek der jongere radicalen’, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* XIV (1891), 103-124.

<sup>61</sup> “...onnoozel...”; “...vulgarisator van oudbakken opinies of wat op opinies mag lijken...”; “...dat wij allen, artiesten, het Groote Onbekende, het Eenig Absolute, waar hij zijn leven aan heeft gewijd om het onsmakelijk te maken met zijn duldeloos gefraseer, veel dieper voelen, diep in ons binnenst, veel zuiverder uiten in geschrevene woorden, dan hij en zijn collega’s van overal in het land.” Quoted from: W.J.Th. Kloos, ‘Over dominee Hugenholtz en Frederik van Eeden’, *De Nieuwe Gids* VI (1891), 301-310, there 303-304.

<sup>62</sup> “...lieve verzekeringen, doorspekt met bijbelplaatsen.”; “...terwijl de wijze, waarop hij het vertelde te pas bracht, mij menigmaal zo ver-gezocht, of zo vaag en onbepaald klonk, dat de portée van zijn gepraat mij [...] vaak volkomen ontging.” Quoted from: Kloos, *Zelfportret*, 99-100.

<sup>63</sup> “...het is in geen jaren beleefd, dat zij andere teekenen van leven gaven, dan een onbeduidende, half-grappige, half-sentimentale literatuur, een banale wijsbegeerte, een politiek van huismiddeltjes en benepen humaniteit, een kunstlooze en grof burgerlijke aesthetica.” Quoted from: Ph. Hack van Outheusden [F. van der Goes], ‘Jong-Amsterdam’, *De Nieuwe Gids* XXX (1888), 460-474, there 466-467. Another member of the Eighties Movement, Herman Gorter, would accompany Van der Goes as a leading socialist intellectual.

Lodewijk van Deyssel (1864-1952), agreed with Van der Goes when he stated that “there is much more poetry and art in historical Christianity than there is in modern theology.” He even reechoed Potgieter and the elderly Pierson by “highly” preferring an orthodox theologian such as Abraham Kuyper to a modernist minister such as Hugenholtz.<sup>64</sup>

In the 1890s, when the Eighties Movement began to disintegrate, naturalism lost its prominence in Dutch literature. Instead of attempting to write about life as ‘raw’ as possible, authors came to focus attention on the human psyche, ‘hidden’ emotions and spirituality. This trend is exemplified by the works of Louis Couperus (1863-1923), editor of *De Gids* in 1894 and 1895, and Frederik van Eeden (1860-1932), editor of *De Nieuwe Gids* from 1885 until 1893 and as such involved with the Eighties Movement. However, the increasing literary interest in supersensory experiences and feelings did not lead to more appreciation for liberal Protestantism in intellectual life. Though not explicitly condemning liberal Protestantism in their writings as such – in the early 1900s, Van Eeden even moved in a circle of utopists, Spiritists and anarchists, of which also some modernists were part –, authors such as Couperus and Van Eeden developed an interest in occultism and mysticism, and consequently left their nominally Protestant backgrounds further and further behind.<sup>65</sup>

One of his earliest biographers, Jesuit H.J. Padberg (1881-1926), claimed in 1925 that Van Eeden developed a distaste for Protestantism and “all positive religion” (religion constrained by theology) at an early age.<sup>66</sup> He more or less reiterated what Van Eeden had himself declared in a 1923 lecture, in which the latter legitimised his recent and controversial conversion to Roman Catholicism.<sup>67</sup> Apparently, as this lecture seems to suggest, Van Eeden had frequented confirmation classes led by a *liberal-minded* minister in his youth, for he characterised his catechist as an “utter atheist and denier of God’s existence” – a characterisation which would make no sense if applied to a dogmatic, orthodox minister, but which was oftentimes used to caricature a modernist minister.<sup>68</sup> These confirmation classes had not increased his sympathy for Christianity in any way; Van Eeden stated to have already been a “full-blooded freethinker” at the age of fifteen and had, in line with that, clearly distanced himself from ecclesial Christianity during his involvement with the Eighties Movement, most notably in his 1887 *Predikantenlied* (*Song of the Pastors*) and his 1894 drama *De broeders* (*The Brothers*).<sup>69</sup>

In retrospect, Couperus claimed to have been a devout child, even though his parents did not go to church. The latter did send him to confirmation classes in the Walloon Reformed congregation of The Hague, but solely because they felt that French-language religious

<sup>64</sup> “Ik beweer dat in het kristendom veel meer poëzie en kunst is, dan in de moderne theologie...” Quoted from: L. van Deyssel, *Verzamelde opstellen* II (Amsterdam [1897] 1901), 171. Lodewijk van Deyssel was the alias of K.J.L. Alberdingk Thijm, who had a Catholic upbringing.

<sup>65</sup> D. Jansen, ‘Spiritisme en theosofie in het werk van Louis Couperus, Marcellus Emants en Frederik van Eeden’, in: G.Th. Jensma and Y.B. Kuiper (eds.), *De god van Nederland is de beste. Elf opstellen over religie in de moderne Nederlandse literatuur* (Kampen 1997), 31-47.

<sup>66</sup> “...allen positieven godsdienst...” Quoted from: H.J. Padberg, *Frederik van Eeden* (Roermond 1925), 11, 200.

<sup>67</sup> Published in: F. van Eeden, *Langs den weg. Verspreide opstellen* (Roermond 1925), 153-184.

<sup>68</sup> “...volslagen atheïst en Godloochenaar...” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 162. This same minister figures in: F. van Eeden, *Brieven. Fragmenten eener briefwisseling uit de jaren 1889-1899* (Amsterdam and Leipzig 1907), 33. There, Van Eeden describes him as someone who was constantly mocked for his trenchant sermons. Van Eeden did not agree with him and would leave Protestantism behind altogether, but ‘adored’ him as a person nonetheless.

<sup>69</sup> “...volbloed vrijdenker...” Quoted in: G. Kalff, Jr., *Frederik van Eeden. Psychologie van den Tachtiger* (Groningen 1927), 23.

instruction was an indispensable element of an upper-class upbringing.<sup>70</sup> As literary critic Van Tricht suggests, it was precisely due to the religious indifference of his parents that Couperus, who strongly disliked his rigidly orthodox catechist,<sup>71</sup> did not feel as much resentment against Christianity and never attacked Christian preachers in such a harsh way as, for example, Multatuli or Kloos.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, Couperus, whose books have been called gnostic-theological pieces of writing, did emphasise not being a Christian and firmly rejected both orthodox and modernist conceptions of God.<sup>73</sup>

In spite of all the developments in Dutch liberal Protestantism after the First World War, the sympathy for the modernist movement in Dutch belletrist circles did not increase. Menno ter Braak (1902-1940), who had been raised in a liberal Protestant family and rose to prominence as one of the most influential intellectuals in the Netherlands in the 1930s, expressed his aversion of modernism on many occasions. In the mid-1920s, for example, he published several articles in the Amsterdam student newspaper *Propria Cures* that ruthlessly denounced the free-floating character and unclear idealism of the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Studentenbond* (Liberal Christian League of Students or VCSB), of which he had briefly been a member. One literary critic would later characterise this controversy as the beginning of Ter Braak's departure from "the kind of Christianity that gives collective ethical precepts in its theology."<sup>74</sup> In 1927, Ter Braak even stated to "hate" liberal Protestantism.<sup>75</sup> Four years later, in *Afscheid van domineesland* (*Taking Leave of Clergymen's Country*), he criticised the "weak, vague and... shapeless form that liberal Protestantism preaches." In order not to give offence to his self-satisfied flock, Ter Braak argued, a minister could never plainly speak the truth, but had to preach hollow phrases. Illustrating his argument by referring to two well-known modernists, Ter Braak uttered that "[a] minister can be edifying, such as Roessingh, or he can be terribly popular, such as Bakels, but he is never clear." He admonished modernists for their half-heartedness, moralism, and inability or unwillingness to change; their world view had become untenable, but "the army of liberal ministers that covers this country" continued to

preach the Gospel of amorphousness (love thy neighbour, the form matters less) in the form of a humanistic, ethical 'Christianity' with a vague Jesus of Nazareth and the Leiden Translation of the Bible. [...] They grope around for everything old and new that can be dealt with eclectically... but they preach their endless Sunday sermons before a shrinking Sunday audience. On all sides, their world view is crumbling away, but they still choose the topics of their sermons from the Old and New Testament every week. [...] [They] maintain that their weekly sermon of love contains the eternal law of love, even when the point will be reached that only one very old *stovenzetster* [a woman who takes care of footstoves in a church building, TK] listens to their preaching – [...] they

<sup>70</sup> F.L. Bastet, *Louis Couperus. Een biografie* (Amsterdam 2005), 87.

<sup>71</sup> H.A.C. van Booven, *Leven en werken van Louis Couperus* (Velsen 1933), 72.

<sup>72</sup> H.W. van Tricht, *Louis Couperus. Een verkenning* (The Hague 1965), 19.

<sup>73</sup> K.J. Popma, *Beschouwingen over het werk van Louis Couperus (1863-1923)* (Amsterdam 1968), 11-12, 127-130, 154, 160, 207-208. In his perhaps most famous novel, *Van oude mensen, de dingen, die voorbij gaan...*, Couperus satirises Roman Catholicism and Protestantism in the characters of the sisters Stefanie and Thèrese. See: P. Hoffman, 'Signalementen – Nieuw licht op "Oude mensen"', *Literatuur* XVI (1999), 196-197.

<sup>74</sup> "Ter Braak was in feite afscheid aan het nemen van het soort christendom dat met theologie collectieve ethische voorschriften gaf." Quoted from: M. ter Braak (C.G.H.A.A.M. Peeters ed.), *De Propria Curesartikelen, 1923-1925* (The Hague 1978), 18.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in: B. Materman, *Menno ter Braak en het dramaturgisch perspectief* (Amsterdam 1986), 26.

will continue to lean on this one exhausted, preached-to-death, utterly exploited and squeezed-out form in which they desperately try to mould all their cultural aspirations: ‘modern Christianity’.<sup>76</sup>

In this quote, Ter Braak implied that ‘modern Christianity’ was like an empty box: it was so vague that it was meaningless. Furthermore, he jestingly indicated that modernists reduced religion to the moralistic imperative to live ‘righteous’ lives, and stressed the outmodedness of liberal Protestantism by limiting its audience to that of a ‘stovenzetster’, a function that had basically become superfluous with the introduction of electrical church heating. A significant sign of Ter Braak’s cultural influence is that after his publication, the term ‘domineesland’ (‘clergymen’s country’) came to signify what many intellectuals perceived as the petty bourgeois, parochial character of the Dutch and their culture.<sup>77</sup> Ter Braak’s close friend and fellow intellectual E. du Perron (1899-1940) modelled a fictional character after him in *Land van herkomst* (*Country of Origin*), published in 1935 – a character that reflects upon his modernist upbringing with resentment and refers to edifying modernist literature as “baloney” written by “some pipsqueak, Reverend Mackenzie or something.”<sup>78</sup>

As this overview demonstrates, leading Dutch intellectuals did not look very favourably on modern theology and the movement that carried its banner in church and society.<sup>79</sup> They denounced

<sup>76</sup> “...de slappe, vage en... vormlooze vorm, die het vrijzinnig protestantisme predikt.”; “De dominee kan stichtelijk zijn, zooals Roessingh, of hij kan afschuwelijk populair zijn, zooals Bakels, helder is hij nooit...”; “...het leger van vrijzinnige predikanten, dat dit land overdekt...”; “Nog steeds prediken zij het evangelie der vormeloosheid (heb maar lief, de vorm doet er minder toe) onder de leuze van een vorm (een humanistisch, ethisch ‘christendom’ met een vagen Jezus van Nazareth en de Leidsche Vertaling). [...] Zij grijpen om zich heen naar alles, wat er door de eeuwen heen maar eklektisch te behandelen valt... maar zij preeken hun eeuwigen zondagspreek voor een steeds schrompelend zondagspubliek. Aan alle zijden brokkelt hun wereldbeeld af, maar zij kiezen weer wekelijks hun tekst uit het Oude en Nieuwe Testament. [...] zullen zij nóg volhouden, dat hun wekelijkse liefdepredikatie de eeuwige liefdewet is, ook al zal slechts nog één stokoude stovenzetster naar de verkondiging luisteren [...], zullen zij nóg teren op dien éénen uitgemerelden, doodgepreekten, leeggezogen en kaal-geplukten vorm, waarnaar zij al hun cultureele aspiraties met den moed der wanhoop ombuigen: het ‘moderne’ christendom.” Quoted from: M. ter Braak, *Afscheid van domineesland* (Brussel 1931), 201, 13, 199-201.

The *Leidsche Vertaling* (Leiden Translation) took its name from the theological faculty of Leiden University. In 1884, in a series of articles in *De Hervorming*, I. Hooykaas argued that modernists were in need of a new translation of the Bible, as he felt that the seventeenth-century *Statenvertaling*, at the time still in use in Dutch Protestant churches, was riddled with ‘superseded’ orthodox Calvinist interpretations. He managed to persuade his brother-in-law H. Oort as well as A. Kuenen and W.H. Kusters (1843-1897), who were all affiliated to the Leiden faculty, to collaborate with him on a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew into Dutch based on historical-critical methods and perspectives. Kuenen, Hooykaas and Kusters all died before the translation was completed. Oort finished the project by himself in 1901. He subsequently started with a historical-critical translation of the New Testament, which he completed in 1912. An edition containing both Testaments was issued by the NPB in 1913. The *Leidsche Vertaling* found some acceptance among modernists, but it received criticism in modernist circles as well. Particularly its use of the name ‘Jahwe’ in reference to God and its ‘modish’ language caused controversy. See: C. Houtman, ‘De Leidse en de Utrechtse Vertaling’, in: A.W.G. Jaakke and E.W. Tuinstra (eds.), *Om een verstaanbare bijbel. Nederlandse bijbelvertalingen na de Statenbijbel* (Haarlem and Brussels 1990), 201-224.

<sup>77</sup> Postma, *Dilettant, pilgrim, nar*, 49.

<sup>78</sup> “...het nagebazel van de een of andere lapzwans, dominee Mackenzie ofzo...” Quoted from: E. du Perron, *Het land van herkomst* (Amsterdam 1935), 322. See also: L.H.M. Hanssen, *Want alle verlies is winst. Menno ter Braak, 1902-1940* (Amsterdam 2000), 199-204. ‘Mackenzie’ probably refers to Remonstrant minister Willem Mackenzie. In the second edition of *Het land van herkomst*, the fragment “van de een of andere lapzwans, dominee Mackenzie ofzo” was replaced by “van de een of andere dominee” (“Reverend What’s-his-name”).

<sup>79</sup> One notable exception in literary circles was poet Jacques Perk (1859-1881). His father, M.A. Perk (1834-1916), was a minister in a Walloon Reformed congregation and went along with the modernist movement. Jacques Perk stated in one of his poems to ‘definitely belong to the modernist movement’ himself as well, although he never actively participated in it. The Eighties Movement was inspired by Perk, but certainly did not share his liberal Protestant persuasion. See: J.F.H. Perk (C. Vosmaer and W.J.Th. Kloos eds.), *Gedichten van Jacques Perk* (Amsterdam [1882] 1889), 16; G. Stuiveling, ‘Perk, Jacques (Fabrice Herman)’, in: A.G.H. Bachrach et al. (eds.), *Moderne En-*



and oftentimes ridiculed the half-heartedness of modernism, the vagueness of modernists' views, the pretensions with which the modernist movement presented itself, modernists' perceived hypocrisy, and modernist ethics. Some of them, such as Pierson and Busken Huet, fulfilled the role of authoritative 'expert witnesses', as they had been modernist ministers themselves and had thus literally *experienced* what was 'wrong' with modernism. The same could be said of Kloos and Ter Braak, who had been raised as modernists. For all of these men, modernism had at a certain moment become no longer satisfactory. This is not to say that orthodoxy did not also fall victim to their sharp pen, although the elderly Pierson, Potgieter, Multatuli and Van Deyssel did show to prefer the sincerity and naiveté with which many orthodox professed their faith to the irresoluteness with which modernists tried to harmonise science, culture and religion. Of course, the overview above cannot do justice to the complexity and diversity of their works, nor can it take into full account that their oeuvre was not 'static'. The young Van Eeden, for example, wrote different books than the elderly Van Eeden. The point here is that all of these men of letters, and the same goes for other key players in Dutch intellectual life, were consistent in their rejection of modernism, or at least never explicitly demonstrated to sympathise, let alone to side, with the modernist movement.<sup>80</sup> True, there were some intellectuals who did applaud the modernist movement and willingly accepted an invitation to speech at the annual *Protestantendag*, among them meteorologist C.H.D. Buys Ballot (1817-1890) in 1875 and liberal politician J.H. Geertsema (1816-1908) in 1893, but their number was very small, already even in the 1870s and 1880s. Modernists lamented this, but, paradoxically, only broadened the gap between themselves and intellectuals.

### 3. Modernist Responses to Intellectuals

If one wants to know which topics and thoughts preoccupied intellectuals in a given period of time, one should read the prose and poetry that was published in that period.<sup>81</sup> Just as the former section, this section will therefore take the circle of leading belletrists as a representative reflection of intellectual life at large. In modernist literary reviews, the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors could clearly be heard.<sup>82</sup> It goes without saying that modernists paid attention in their reviews to the plot of a book, the way in which protagonists are portrayed in a novel, and an author's style of writing and use of metaphors. Belletrists such as Multatuli and Couperus were consequently praised for their literary genius. The *ultimate* criterion on which modernist book reviewers based their critique, however, was not aesthetics, but ethics. Literature only received a positive final judgement if it was the product of an elevated mind, if it contributed to intellectual development, and if it increased (liberal) religiousness and morality. Naturalism, materialism and the notion of '*l'art pour l'art*' (art for its own sake), particularly

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*cyclopedie van de Wereldliteratuur* VII (Haarlem and Antwerp [1963] 1983), 193-194; R. Breugelmans, *Jacques Perk* (New York 1974), 17.

<sup>80</sup> E.g.: [H.Y. Groenewegen in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Buitenland', *De Hervorming* 1907-44 (2 November 1907), 349-350, there 350.

<sup>81</sup> As Van der Ent writes: "...after all, literary works reflect contemporary thinking." ("...literaire werken weer spiegelen immers de mening van een tijd.") Quoted from: H. van der Ent, *Literatuur en christelijk perspectief* (The Hague 1982), 102.

<sup>82</sup> One example of how *orthodox* Protestants reviewed contemporary literature is given in: B. Wielenga, *Moderne letterkunde en christelijke opvoeding* (Amsterdam 1922). Modernist and orthodox Protestants both favoured religious motifs in literature, but for the latter, these motifs had to be explicitly Trinitarian.

dominant in the Eighties Movement, therefore met with no appreciation in modernist circles.<sup>83</sup> Recognising that publicists could highly influence public opinion, modernists felt that they should be fully aware of the great social responsibility that they bore.

For modernist reviewers, the value of a novel or poem highly depended on the intentions with which the author had written it.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, these reviewers felt that protagonists in literary writings should be ‘spiritual aristocrats’ who could serve as an example to others by having a clear mind, a religious or at least idealistic attitude to life, and high moral principles. That way, spiritually less developed people would be given a ‘helping hand’ to (further) develop themselves cognitively, religiously and ethically. Literature that could incite ‘indecent’ or ‘improper’ thoughts and behaviours, by focusing attention on the weakness of the flesh or by undermining the close connection between religious and ethical life, was seen as a threat to spiritual public welfare and hence as an obstruction to the free development of spiritual life. After all, as the predominant modernist line of reasoning had it, spiritual life could only develop freely if individuals were not just freed from the chains of superstition and supernaturalist dogmatism, but also if ‘lower impulses’, bad morals and the spirits bottle no longer had control over them. For that reason, modernists not only made a stand against orthodox obscurantism and intolerance under the colours of the NPB, but at the same time also against prostitution, pauperism, alcoholism, as well as literature that unquestioningly depicted or even romanticised such ethically objectionable practices.<sup>85</sup> Several examples will serve to illustrate this.

Modernists reacted not only resentfully to Pierson’s and Busken Huet’s abdication, but also in a manner depreciatory to these former modernists’ literary work. The first novel Pierson wrote after he had permanently stepped down from the pulpit was *Adriaan de Mèrival*, published in 1866. The protagonist of this novel, an assistant minister in a fictional village congregation, falls in love with a girl who, due to a complicated history full of infidelity, misunderstandings and intrigues, is wrongly believed to be his sister. When it turns out that Adriaan and this girl are not related at all, their affection for each other can still not fully blossom: Adriaan is Dutch Reformed, while his love interest, Caroline Martin, is Roman Catholic and continues to be so. An important supporting role in the novel is that of Doctor Beelen, the village physician. The erudite and freethinking Beelen dislikes Christianity from the bottom of his heart. According to him, Christian ethics foster weakness and selfishness. Moreover, he is convinced that Christianity suppresses man’s true nature. Genuine humanity can hence not find expression in religion, but only in art, for “all human sensations, convictions, principles, actions are valued

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<sup>83</sup> E.g.: E.J.W. Koch, ‘Een slecht gekozen geneesmiddel’, *De Hervorming* 1884-36 (6 September 1884), 143-144; Mary, ‘Doodzwijgen of protesteeren?’, *Ibid.* 1888-41 (13 October 1888), 161-162; B.B., ‘Onze leestafel – “Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente”’, *Ibid.* 1891-20 (16 May 1891), 80; H. de Lang, ‘Hoop’, *Ibid.* 1891-29 (18 July 1891), 116; [H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Afd. St. Anna-Parochie’, *Ibid.* 1895-52 (28 December 1925), 207.

<sup>84</sup> As J.H. Maronier expressed what was generally felt in modernist circles: a novel could only enhance spiritual life if it was the product of a “clean imagination” and if it “evoked ideals of a pure ethical quality.” (“...dat alleen van die romans voor ‘t godsdienstig-zedelijk leven iets te verwachten is die uit een reïne verbeelding gevloeid beelden en idealen van zuiver-zedelijk gehalte oproepen voor den geest.”) Quoted from: [J.H. Maronier in:] ‘Vergadering van moderne theologen op 30 April en 1 Mei’, *Ibid.* 1878-21 (25 May 1878), 1-2, there 2.

<sup>85</sup> See also: T.E.M. Krijger, ‘Vrijzinnigen als fatsoensrakers. Multatuli en Couperus aan de maatstaf van zedelijkheid getoetst (±1880-±1920)’, *Ruimte / Mens & Tijd* 2015-03 (2015), 3-5.

by an artist not by the criterion of truth or morality, but exclusively by a standard that is provided to him by human nature itself: his own aesthetic sense.”<sup>86</sup>

Modernists, on the other hand, based their appreciation of art precisely on what they regarded as truth and true morality. The anonymous reviewer in the modernist literary magazine *Los en Vast* accordingly made mincemeat of *Adriaan de Mérival*. He blamed Pierson for letting Caroline go to ethical-religious ruin – Pierson’s novel would have gained in strength if Adriaan had helped Caroline to recognise the superiority of liberal Protestantism over Roman Catholicism.<sup>87</sup> Moreover, Pierson wrote about freethinker Beelen with so much sympathy that “he prepares the world for a new deluge [the downfall of Christian civilisation, TK], if his novel, with its monstrous theories and deeply poisoned purport, will ever become popular.”<sup>88</sup> The reviewer therefore concluded that *Adriaan de Mérival* was “a thoroughly unethical novel.” The characters “do not seem to care about religion in any way” and let their “bestial passions” rule them. Even if Pierson had not meant to encourage people to forswear their religion and moral compass, he should have known what the consequences of openly writing about irreligious and immoral thoughts and deeds could be. But the reviewer found it hard to avoid the impression that Pierson had intentionally written the novel to popularise the same ‘reprehensible’ ideas put forward in *De moderne richting en de kristelijke kerk*.<sup>89</sup> In sum, Pierson had neglected his responsibility as an opinion leader by destroying instead of enhancing spiritual life. Such stinging critique on Pierson’s (and Busken Huet’s) writings was no exception.<sup>90</sup> After an umpteenth negative review of one of Pierson’s writings, one letter writer in *De Hervorming* of 15 September 1888 even questioned whether modernist reviewers were not too harsh in their critique: “is everyone allowed to say anything as long as it is about Dr Pierson?” This letter writer was rather embarrassed to see that Pierson was constantly “showered with insults” in modernist circles.<sup>91</sup>

Looking back upon modernist opinions about Multatuli in past and present, one article writer in *De Hervorming* of 11 January 1908 stated to feel that modernists have been and still

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<sup>86</sup> “Alle menschelijke gewaarwordingen, overtuigingen, beginselen, handelingen worden door den kunstenaar gemeten, niet aan den maatstaf van waarheid of zedelijkheid, maar uitsluitend aan een maatstaf, die hem aan de hand wordt gedaan door de menschelijke natuur zelve, beschouwd bij het licht van zijn eigen schoonheidsgevoel.” Quoted from: A. Pierson, *Adriaan de Mérival. Een leerjaar III* (Arnhem 1866), 34.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Adriaan de Mérival. Een leerjaar’, *Los en Vast* II (1867), 10-68, there 25-26. The reviewer probably was G. van Gorkom.

<sup>88</sup> “Ik ontveins intusschen niet, dat de roman van Pierson deze wereld voor een nieuwen zondvloed zou bereiden, als hij – de roman – met zijn monstrueuse theoriën, zijn innig vergiftigden Tendens, ooit kans had populair te worden.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 48-49.

<sup>89</sup> “...een door en door onzedelijk boek.”; “...een boek waarin de meeste figuren zich, naar het schijnt, voor geen godsdienst hoegenaamd interesseeren.”; “...de dierlijke hartstochten der menschen...” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 56-68. This reviewer, and many other reviewers with him, was of the belief that Pierson had modelled Beelen after himself. In a letter to Kuenen, however, Pierson denied this. See: Pierson (Trapman ed.), *Tussen religieus gevoel en kritisch denken*, 15, note 32. In fact, Beelen was modelled after the late J.B. Molewater (1813-1864), the director of a hospital in Rotterdam who had been a close friend of Pierson. See: Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 55, note 51.

<sup>90</sup> For example, Busken Huet’s 1868 novel *Lidewyde*, infamous for its rather explicit depiction of carnal desires and adultery, was just as harshly criticised in *Los en Vast* as *Adriaan de Mérival*. Just as Pierson, Huet was blamed for the “feebleness of his ethical convictions,” for not clearly condemning ‘evil’ in his novel. See: G. van Gorkom, ‘Lidewyde’, *Los en Vast* III (1868), 225-295, there 282.

<sup>91</sup> “Is alles iedereen geoorloofd, zoodra het dr. Pierson geldt?”; “...den smaad, waarmede hij overladen wordt...” Quoted from: W.J. van Douwen, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1888-37 (15 September 1888), 148. Van Douwen remarked that whereas modernists generally slashed Pierson’s writings to shreds, others generally praised his literary work.

were ‘struggling’ with him.<sup>92</sup> They acknowledged his stylistic qualities, but generally condemned the content and influence of his writings. As could be read in *De Hervorming* in early 1882, Multatuli was “no champion of the freedom of the mind,” in spite of what his devotees maintained, for he “triflingly” portrayed *all* religious idealism as backward in his rejection of dogmatism and clericalism.<sup>93</sup> Multatuli took delight in making modernist ministers the butt of his “here and there cruel mockery” without making the effort to actually study modernism himself.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, he accepted nature as man’s only moral compass, but failed to recognise that true morality rather called for the suppression of certain natural urges.<sup>95</sup> His writings were said to propagate the naturalist idea that all that is natural is intrinsically good, as well as the materialist idea that all that is real is fundamentally material instead of spiritual, which had devastating consequences for the Dutch people’s spiritual life.<sup>96</sup> A letter writer in *De Blijde Wereld* of 16 August 1907 poetically characterised Multatuli as “an iconoclast, not a reformer”: he ridiculed existing thoughts about a higher being or force on which nature rested, and scoffed at moral norms without having any ideals of his own.<sup>97</sup> Even though modernists gradually came to reconsider this last point of view in the 1910s and 1920s,<sup>98</sup> the modernist opinion press perseveringly depicted Multatuli as the apostle of religious scepticism, insubordination and immorality, whose writings incited people to licentiousness.

Multatuli did not take all this criticism lying down. After the Rotterdam-based magazine *De Protestant* had complained in 1884 that “respectable gentlemen and distinguished ladies, young men and even girls [...] have accepted all that is mean and have become accustomed to all that is dirty by reading Multatuli,” he took up his pen.<sup>99</sup> In a letter sent to several newspapers, Multatuli quoted these lines from *De Protestant* and cynically added that they deserved to be read by as many people as possible, as they were a pre-eminent testimony to the ‘tolerance’ and ‘liberality’ on which modernists prided themselves.<sup>100</sup> Domela Nieuwenhuis wrote a letter to Multatuli in which he expressed approval with this “poignant” and “justified” response to *De Protestant*, and fully identified himself with Multatuli as a martyr of the God-less Truth chased by modernist inquisitors: “those modernists are the perfect leaders of the blind! In the same week, I had to read in *De Hervorming*, the magazine of the half-baked *Protestantenbond*, that, according to ‘us’, modernist spokesmen, I have lost all sense of morality. Hence, brother, give

<sup>92</sup> V.R.D., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Is Multatuli in zijn latere dagen tot het geloof in God gekomen?’, *Ibid.* 1908-02 (11 January 1908), 14.

<sup>93</sup> “...geen voorstander van geestesvrijheid...”; “...op lichtzinnige wijze...” Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Een nationaal huldeblijk aan E. Douwes Dekker’, *Ibid.* 1882-13 (1 April 1882), 51.

<sup>94</sup> “...hier en daar ruwen spot...” Quoted from: J.W. van der Linden, ‘Over Multatuli’, *Ibid.* 1887-10 (5 March 1887), 38.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Multatuli’, *Ibid.* 1887-12 (19 March 1887), 47-48.

<sup>96</sup> L. Knappert, ‘Onze leestafel – “Letterkundige opstellen”’, *Ibid.* 1894-37 (15 September 1894), 147-148.

<sup>97</sup> “...een beeldenstormer, geen hervormer...” Quoted from: ‘Van verre en nabij’, *De Blijde Wereld* V.43 (16 August 1907), 2-3, there 3. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Ter school bij Multatuli’, *De Hervorming* 1893-03 (21 January 1893), 11; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Multatuli en het Godsgeloof’, *Ibid.* 1908-03 (18 January 1908), 19-20; H. Bakels, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De Multatuli-quaestie’, *Ibid.* 1908-03 (18 January 1908), 22.

<sup>98</sup> [G. de Leeuw in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Een lezing over Multatuli’, *Ibid.* 1912-07 (17 February 1912), 51-52; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Multatuli vóór vijftig jaar’, *Ibid.* 1920-08 (28 February 1920), 29-30.

<sup>99</sup> “...deftige heeren en aanzienlijke dames, jonge mannen en zelfs meisjes [...] [die] door de lezing van Multatuli verzoend zijn geraakt met wat gemeen en gewend aan wat vuil is.” Quoted from: ‘Mededeelingen en berichten – Meedoen (Seraphine)’, *De Protestant* II.38 (20 September 1884), 3-4. See also: Multatuli (H. van den Bergh and B.P.M. Don-gelmans eds.), *Volledige werken* XIII. *Brieven en documenten uit de jaren 1884-1886* (Amsterdam 1993), 206-207.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 243-244, 252-253, 260-261.

me your hand, we have sunk low in the eyes of these gentlemen and there is only one way left to receive salvation, that is, throwing ourselves into their hands, while begging for mercy, [and] muddling along and swindling with them.”<sup>101</sup> Multatuli and Domela both moved in the circle of atheist freethinkers grouped around *De Dageraad*. Whereas Domela only supported Multatuli in private correspondence, another *Dageraad* freethinker, J. Hobbel (1857-1931), publicly stood up for him in his controversy with *De Protestant*.<sup>102</sup> Hobbel claimed not to understand modernists’ approach to literature and literary criticism: they blamed Multatuli for writing literature that might stimulate people’s imagination and senses, but they did not erase passages from the Bible that were ethically far more appalling than Multatuli’s writings.<sup>103</sup> However, as *De Protestant* indicated, the books of the Bible bore no comparison with those of Multatuli: inciting immorality had not been the intention of the authors of the Bible, but it could at least be questioned whether it had not been Multatuli’s intention either.<sup>104</sup>

At the meeting of modern theologians of 1891, Van Loenen Martinet held a lecture about ‘fatalism in our most recent literature’, which was actually, in spite of its broad title, mostly devoted to Louis Couperus. Reviewing Couperus’s first and second novel, *Eline Vere* and *Noodlot* (*Fate*), Van Loenen Martinet noticed with regret that novelists such as Couperus had a penchant for portraying characters who just let life ‘happen’ to them without having any ideals and principles worth fighting for. Such a fatalistic attitude to life “is a pathogen that affects [the body] and corrodes the sense of responsibility, sense of duty, self-control – in one word: the moral personality.”<sup>105</sup> Moreover, in writings such as those of Couperus, religion did not seem to be a determining factor in what people thought and did. Van Loenen Martinet did not say that novelists should abstain from writing about the dark sides of life altogether, although he was certainly not very pleased with passages describing these dark sides, but he did exhort them to

<sup>101</sup> “...raak en verdiend.”; “Maar die modernen zyn prachtige leidslieden van blinden! Juist in diezelfde week moest ik ervaren uit de Hervorming, het orgaan van den halfbakken Protestantenvond, dat ik volgens het oordeel ‘ons’, moderne woordvoerders, zedelyk was ondergegaan. Dus, broeder, reik mij de hand, wy zyn diep gezonken in de oogen dier heeren en slechts één middel tot redding blyft over, nl. om ons te werpen in hun armen om vergiffenis smeekende met hen te schipperen en te knoeien.” Quoted from: Multatuli (Van den Bergh and Dongelmans eds.), *Volledige werken* XXIII, 245-247, there 246. Domela referred to: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Een eisch van het materialistisch socialisme afgewezen’, *De Hervorming* 1884-47 (22 November 1884), 187.

<sup>102</sup> Hobbel would later become on bad terms with Domela, after writing a fierce attack on political socialism. Although Multatuli would also publicly state not to share Domela’s political socialism, Domela and Multatuli kept up correspondence with each other. See: Van der Meulen, *Multatuli*, 736.

<sup>103</sup> J. Hobbel, ‘Multatuli’s verderfelijke invloed’, *De Dageraad* VI (1884-1885), 377-382. Multatuli was not very pleased with Hobbel’s defence, as Hobbel did not say that his work was not immoral at all, but only stated that his work was *less* immoral compared to the Bible. See: N.M.H. Maas, ‘Als een priester en zijn preekstoel. Multatuli en het tijdschrift “De Dageraad”’, in: Derkx et al. (ed.), *Voor menselijkheid of tegen godsdienst?*, 69-83, there 82.

<sup>104</sup> ‘Antwoord aan den heer J. Hobbel’, *De Protestant* II.49 (6 December 1884), 2-3; ‘Iets over den invloed van Multatuli’, *Ibid.* II.50 (13 December 1884), 1-2. See also: ‘Pluksel – Vrijzinnige onzin’, *De Nederlandsche Spectator* 1884-50 (13 December 1884), 407; ‘Pluksel – “De Protestant” ca. Multatuli’, *Ibid.* 1884-52 (27 December 1884), 423; Multatuli (Van den Bergh and Dongelmans eds.), *Volledige werken* XIII, 247-250, 254-260. Hobbel urged the editors of *De Protestant* to bring forward proof of Multatuli’s negative influence. The editors refused to comply to his request, arguing that it would oblige them to make “an anthology of *double entendres* and debaucheries” (“*eene bloemlezing van dubbelzinnigheden en zedeloze aardigheden*”) in Multatuli’s books. Such an anthology would be entirely at odds with the spirit and objectives of *De Protestant*. The editors were willing to have a private conversation with Hobbel, albeit “with reluctance” (“*met weerzin*”). See: ‘Correspondentie’, *De Protestant* II.40 (4 October 1884), 4; II.42 (18 October 1884), 4.

<sup>105</sup> “...het is toch een ziektestof die invreet, en het besef van verantwoordelijkheid, het plichtgevoel, de zelfbeheersing, met één woord de zedelijke persoonlijkheid wegvreet.” Quoted from: J. van Loenen Martinet, *Het fatalisme in onze jongste letterkunde* (Haarlem 1891), 14.

present their readership with a higher, idealistic philosophy of life. Belletrists as Couperus refrained from doing that. The modernist movement, Van Loenen Martinet concluded, therefore had the lofty duty “to create a moral and spiritual environment in which those gifted with literary talents will [be able to] prophesy as poets, playwrights and novelists about a different spirit [different from the spirit with which writings such as those of Couperus were suffused, TK] and testify to a purer and higher vital urge.”<sup>106</sup>

Van Deyssel threw himself into the breach for Couperus. Initially, he observed with amusement that people felt the need to write “philosophical-ethical treatises” about books as *Eline Vere* and *Noodlot*. On further consideration, however, he lost his jeering laugh and came to realise that men such as Van Loenen Martinet were “false,” for their treatises “are based on a view of literature that is archaic, different from and almost opposed to the view of literature that the creator of those superb pieces of writing [Couperus, TK] consciously or unconsciously has.” Van Loenen Martinet, Van Deyssel analysed, could only appreciate novels if they had a moralistic drift that stuck out a mile. As a result, he wrongfully read Couperus’s novels as a recommendation of a fatalistic attitude to life and was unable to fathom the psychological and emotional depth of these novels.<sup>107</sup>

Van Deyssel rightly noticed that modernist reviewers had a view of literature in which ethics were ultimately more important than aesthetics. The latter continued to base their appreciation of Couperus’s novels on the standard of edification. They recognised that Couperus, unlike Multatuli, was no materialist and had a sense of spirituality, but insisted that this spiritual sense should not find expression in a conceptual universe and vocabulary referring to a supernatural reality, the existence of which modernists denied. Yet, that was exactly what Couperus did in, for example, his 1892 collection of short stories *Eene illuzie* (*An Illusion*). The description of hidden, magical powers that were supposed to influence nature, L. Knappert argued, could arouse all kinds of “superstitious thoughts” and “morbid fantasies” in readers, and was therefore as unwholesome as literary pornography.<sup>108</sup> The same was true of the evocative and revealing descriptions of debauchery in some of Couperus’s novels.<sup>109</sup> One of these novels was *Hooge troeven* (*High Trumps*), published in 1896, which received a negative review in *De Hervorming* and the politically liberal-conservative, modernist-oriented *De Tijdspiegel* (*The Mirror of the Age*) because of its setting in “physically and ethically perverted court circles.”<sup>110</sup> In both magazines, reviewer Knappert also ripped *Langs lijnen van geleidelijkheid* (*Along the Lines of Gradualness*) to pieces. Due to the libertine style of living of its protagonists, he referred to this 1900 novel in

<sup>106</sup> “Onzer de taak om een zedelijk en geestelijk milieu te vormen, waarbinnen de met letterkundig talent begaafden straks als dichters, als dramatici, als romanschrijvers profeteeren zullen van een anderen geest en getuigen van reiner en hooger levensdrang.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 28-29.

<sup>107</sup> “...wijsgeerig-zedekundige verhandelingen...”; “...om dat zulke verhandelingen tot basis hebben een literatuur-begrip, anterieur, anders en bijna tegenover-gesteld aan het literatuur-begrip, dat, bewust of onbewust, de maker van deze prachtwerken heeft.” Quoted from: L. van Deyssel, *Prozastukken* (Amsterdam 1895), 183-190. The quote is on p. 185.

<sup>108</sup> “...bijgeloovige gedachten...”; “...ziekelijke droomerijen...” Quoted from: L. Knappert, ‘Betooverde wereld’, *De Hervorming* 1892-30 (23 July 1892), 117-118, there 117.

<sup>109</sup> W., ‘Leestafel – Kleinzieligheid’, *Ibid.* 1902-19 (10 May 1902), 148-149.

<sup>110</sup> “...lichamelijk en zedelijk bedorven hofwereld...” Quoted from: ‘Onze leestafel – “Hooge troeven”’, *Ibid.* 1896-24 (13 June 1896), 95. See also: L. Knappert, ‘Daling’, *De Tijdspiegel* LIII.3 (1896), 283-289.

*De Hervorming* as “this piece of filth,”<sup>111</sup> and blamed Couperus in *De Tijdspiegel* for not being the ‘spiritual aristocrat’ he ought to be: *Langs lijnen van geheidelijkheid* contains “the most cynical preaching of sexual urges as [man’s deepest motive], ever written in our literary history... It is harmful that Couperus, owing to his fame and influence, makes so many people acquainted with this preaching – his artistic sense and talent make no odds against that.”<sup>112</sup> The 1905 novel *De berg van licht* (*The Mountain of Light*), to take a last example, was characterised in *De Hervorming* as “a poisonous book [...], in which disgraceful, beastly excesses of sexual-sensual life are described in extreme detail [and] with outrageously brutal graphicness.”<sup>113</sup> All in all, modernist reviewers acknowledged that Couperus was a master at bringing out the richness of the Dutch language, but not at edifying the Dutch nation: precisely because of his beautiful style of writing, readers could get the impression that it is the decadence depicted in his novels that makes life worth living.<sup>114</sup>

Of course, as the previous section has shown, the literary world was no static entity with fixed ideals and fixed interests: as in society and culture in general, materialism had had its day and spiritual affairs became more prominent in the circle of belletrists at the beginning of the twentieth century. Similarly, as the previous chapters have analysed, the modernist movement was not immutable either: malcontentism, right-wing modernism and the ‘ecclesial turn’ decisively influenced its evolution. Yet, just as modernism continued to be looked down upon in intellectual circles, so too did literary criticism continued to be based on the standard of edification in modernist circles. Knappert, for example, lamented in 1894 that contemporary literature lacked the qualities of genuinely ‘good’ literature: it glamorised a life without purpose and without a sense of duty, distressed instead of encouraged people, and was suffused with a spirit of world-weariness and boredom – all of which, Knappert felt, was closely connected to belletrists’ agnostic or atheist attitude to life.<sup>115</sup> Three years later, A. Carlier, writing under the pen name ‘Censor’, was shown to be of the same mind: most recently published novels gave the impression that life was meaningless, and bred pessimism, melancholia and weariness with life. Although novelists should not sermonise, they should be fully aware of the strong influence their writings exerted on their readers, “whose spiritual life is usually imperfectly developed, and [who usually] lack a clear attitude to life, a pure aesthetic sense and moral strength.” For that reason, novels should not focus on immoral thoughts and situations, and should have protagonists who inspire people to cherish high moral ideals. “Every form of art,” Carlier therefore concluded, “that disregards what ought to prevail in human life, namely the ethically

<sup>111</sup> “...dit vieze stuk...” Quoted from: [L. Knappert], ‘Berichten, enz. – Nog eene examen-vraag’, *De Hervorming* 1900-34 (25 August 1900), 261.

<sup>112</sup> “...de meest cynische prediking van de geslachtsdrift als fatum, ooit in onze letteren geschreven. [...] Dat Couperus door zijn naam en zijn invloed zoo tallozen met deze prediking vertrouwd maakt, is een schade, door al zijne kunst en al zijn talent niet opgewogen.” Quoted from: L. Knappert, ‘Twee tegenvoeters’, *De Tijdspiegel* LVII.3 (1900), 424-430, there 429-430.

<sup>113</sup> “...een verfoeilijk boek [...], waarin beneden-beestelijke uitspattingen van het sexueel-zinnelijke leven met de uiterste uitvoerigheid, met ongehoord-brutale aanschouwelijkheid worden geteekend.” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Een verfoeilijk boek’, *De Hervorming* 1906-08 (24 February 1906), 61.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Berichten, enz. – Geestes-aristocratie’, *Ibid.* 1901-04 (26 January 1901), 28; A.G.-d.W., ‘Leestafel’, *Ibid.* 1901-29 (20 July 1901), 228; P.H. Veen, ‘Leestafel – “Van oude mensen”’, *Ibid.* 1906-31 (4 August 1906), 243-244; L. Knappert, ‘Louis Couperus’, *De Tijdspiegel* LIII.3 (1896), 157-185, there 174. See also: M. Galle, *Couperus in de kritiek* (Amsterdam 1963), 15-18.

<sup>115</sup> L. Knappert, ‘Vermoeide mensen en vermoeide schrijvers’, *De Hervorming* 1894-03 (20 January 1894), 9.

good, is dangerous and condemnable.”<sup>116</sup> J.J. Meyer, one of the experts on modern art in modernist circles, expressed himself in similar terms by stating in 1907 that aesthetics and ethics could not be separated: contemporary literature was not primarily objectionable because it openly depicted immorality, but rather because it disseminated low spirits.<sup>117</sup>

Meyer repeated this in a 1909 booklet, as part of the NPB-series *Redelijke godsdienst*, on ‘the religious content of our youngest literature’.<sup>118</sup> Moreover, while recognising manifestations of the notion that there is ‘more between heaven and earth’ in the works of, among others, Kloos, Van Deyssel and Van Eeden, he disqualified these manifestations as ‘mysticism’, as a directionless spiritual quest, which was only a surrogate for true religion. Present-day belletrists sought spiritual fulfilment in life itself, leaving God aside, and took art to be the replacement of Christian worship. However, even though explicit, obvious expressions of piety in a poem or novel did not say anything about the artistic quality of this piece of writing, Meyer insisted that a poem or novel should diffuse the ‘spirit of Christ’ and that it could only do so if its author lived in an intimate relationship with God.<sup>119</sup> Searching for ‘religious elements’ in Dutch literature published between 1880 and 1920, K.F. Proost basically confirmed Meyer’s judgement in a 1922 study. Although he was pleased to see that the materialist, irreligious and often outright anti-religious attitude to life that had dominated intellectual life before 1900 was no longer in fashion, he was critical of the kind of spirituality surfacing in early twentieth-century literature. What Meyer had castigated as a ‘mysticist’ undercurrent, Proost deprecatorily referred to as ‘wereldvlucht’ or ‘levensvlucht’, the escapist tendency to romanticise the past, the exotic or the eccentric, and to dream away in otherworldly utopias without inspiring people to reform the here and now. In these disapproving words, Proost’s politically socialist creed could clearly be heard: art should enhance social cohesion by inciting public outcry over social wrongs, sympathy for the oppressed, and an urge to build a better society.<sup>120</sup> At the same time, his liberal Protestant persuasion resonated in his condemnation of ‘levensvlucht’: “we do not ask for a ‘cult of beauty’ [art as religion, TK], which is an estrangement from [real] life. We ask for art with meaning, idealistic art, art in service of [the community], because it expresses thoughts [and] breeds ideas. [...] We hope for the unity of aesthetics and ethics. [...] The future will bring faith, religion, beauty. Out of this unity, religious art will develop.”<sup>121</sup>

<sup>116</sup> “En dat innerlijk leven is zelden volkomen ontwikkeld, is dikwijls arm aan heldere begrippen, arm aan zuiver schoonheidsgevoel, arm aan zedelijke kracht...”; “Gevaarlijk en geoordeeld acht ik elke kunst, die geen rekening houdt met wat in het leven van den mensch de eerste plaats moet innemen, het zedelijk goede.” Quoted from: Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Kunst en zede’, *Ibid.* 1897-38 (18 September 1897), 149-150, there 150.

<sup>117</sup> J.J. Meyer, ‘Kunst en zedelijkheid’, *Ibid.* 1907-34 (24 August 1907), 265-266. See also: Meyer, *Kunst en zedelijkheid*, 12-13.

<sup>118</sup> Meyer, *Het godsdienstig gehalte in onze nieuwe letterkunde*, 4. He preferred to spell his surname as ‘Meyer’, but on the title page of this booklet his name is spelled as ‘Meijer’. For his activities as an art critic in the 1920s and 1930s, see: Jansen, *Een kunstenaar op de kansel*, 70-90.

<sup>119</sup> Meyer, *Het godsdienstig gehalte in onze nieuwe letterkunde*, 50-59.

<sup>120</sup> See also: K.F. Proost, ‘Hoofdartikel – Socialistische kunst’, *De Hervorming* 1922-50 (16 December 1922), 393-394; K.F. Proost, ‘Kunst en letteren – Het leven en de kunst’, *Ibid.* 1923-12 (24 March 1923), 92-93; K.F. Proost, *Socialistische kunst* (Arnhem 1925).

<sup>121</sup> “...nog minder vragen wij enkele ‘schoonheidscultus’, die levensvervreemding is. Wij vragen kunst met inhoud, idealistische kunst, dienende kunst, omdat zij gedachten vertolkt, ideeën verwekt. [...] Wij hopen op de eenheid van het aesthetische en het ethische. [...] [De] toekomst zal brengen geloof, religie, schoonheid. En uit die eenheid zal religieuze kunst groeien.” Quoted from: K.F. Proost, *De religie in onze moderne literatuur, 1880-1920* (Zeist 1922), 159-160. The quote is on p. 160.



#### 4. The Modernist Movement and Contemporary Literature: An Evaluation

Were there no people in this diffuse bloc called ‘the modernist movement’ who had a different approach to literature than the modernists referred to above? The answer can only be: hardly any, if at all. As already mentioned, there was one letter writer in *De Hervorming* who was not very pleased with modernist reviews of Pierson’s writings. However, the person concerned, Mennonite minister W.J. van Douwen (1846-1912), only explicitly disapproved the high tone modernist reviewers took with Pierson; he did not defend the *content* of Pierson’s writings. In 1902, a certain ‘C.P.’ stressed, more than other modernists dealing with this subject before him, that appreciation of literature can never solely be based on an ethical standard as such. Yet, he too maintained that the value of a book ultimately depends on the *intention* with which it has been written. Depending on whether an author writes about immorality with the intention of educating his readership, filling people with disgust or titillating people’s senses, his book is either a valuable contribution to the popularisation of psychological-medical knowledge, a good sermon or rubbish – but in none of these three cases was it appropriate to speak of ‘literature’ in an artistic, aesthetic sense. Only if an author writes about immorality in a simple and naïve way as part of human nature, as part of a whole array of human emotions and real-life situations, in order to move people to the depths of their soul, does his book deserve to be called ‘good literature’.<sup>122</sup> Seven years later, J.J. Meyer also emphasised that ethics cannot be the *exclusive* basis of literary criticism: the purpose of art was not moralistic. Yet, believing that ethics and aesthetics are inseparable, he did contend that writing about immorality could only be appreciated if it plucked people’s heartstrings. Again, all came down to the intention of the author.<sup>123</sup>

Already blamed for having ‘vague’ religious beliefs and for half-heartedly mixing science and religion, modernists only confirmed intellectuals in their negative opinion on modernism by solely appreciating a literary piece of writing if it contributed to spiritual development. Modernist discourse, in which the idea was expressed that the portrayal of ‘unethical’ thoughts and behaviours in novels could only be tolerated if it was reduced to a minimum and if it was written with the intention of evoking lofty images and emotions, conflicted with belletrists’ own, purely aesthetic, experimental and anti-bourgeois view of literature and reeked too much of the conservative values of respectability, tranquillity and conformism voiced by the mid-nineteenth-century ‘preacher-poets’, who had dominated the Dutch literary scene before the 1880s and whose prose and poetry they utterly detested. Modernists accused belletrists of neglecting the responsibility they had as opinion formers, the duty to enhance spiritual life; to be and to portray ‘spiritual aristocrats’, so to speak. Literary reviews published in *De Hervorming* and other liberal Protestant periodicals conveyed the ‘*burgermansfatsoen*’ (‘bourgeois morality’) – the moral code to think and act ‘decently’ –, against which belletrists ferociously fulminated in their poems and novels. Moreover, due to their view of literature, modernists could only criticise the elements of idealism and spirituality that they detected in contemporary, particularly early twentieth-century literature as not being ‘pure’ enough. All in all, in spite of the continuous lamentations that their movement did not exert the influence on intellectual life that modernists wanted it to have, modernist discourse preserved and even broadened the gap that existed between modernists and leading Dutch intellectuals.

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<sup>122</sup> C.P., ‘Iets over het beschrijven van lage dingen in de kunst’, *De Hervorming* 1902-20 (17 May 1902), 154-155.

<sup>123</sup> J.J. Meyer, ‘Ingezonden stukken – “Onzedelijke” letterkunde’, *Ibid.* 1909-09 (27 February 1909), 70. See also: Meyer, *Kunst en zedelijkheid*, 33.

## 9. BECOMING A PILLARET

### 1. The Uncontrollable Need to Organise

In the first issue of *De Hervorming* of 1923, co-editor H.T. de Graaf, who belonged, together with K.H. Roessingh and G.J. Heering, to the most influential modernist opinion makers of the 1920s, reflected upon contemporary Dutch civil society. His present-day compatriots, he began, seemed to be driven by the uncontrollable need to establish all kinds of voluntary associations, the number of which had become “shockingly” high.<sup>1</sup> To emphasise the intensity with which this need manifested itself, De Graaf mentioned the intention of some to found an association against toy soldiers, which even he, a confirmed pacifist, considered to be ridiculous. He questioned whether all voluntary associations really had a legitimate reason to exist and asked why there were so many of them. Associations, he admitted, were needed because an individual could easily feel lost in the immense society of the present day and because certain goals could only be realised if people joined forces. Yet, in contemporary society, there were numerous associations pursuing the same goal, the only difference between them being the religious or political orientation of their membership. This was the result, De Graaf explained, of both Roman Catholics’ and orthodox Protestants’ tendency to “huddle together” – in all spheres of life, these groups separated themselves from others (and each other) solely because those others did not have the same faith as they had.<sup>2</sup>

De Graaf pointed to a phenomenon identified as ‘*verzuiling*’ (‘pillarisation’) in the introductory chapter.<sup>3</sup> In the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Netherlands, Roman Catholics, orthodox, predominantly Kuyparian, Protestants and, in some segments of society, social democrats as well began to found associations of their own, meant to increase their social influence, to ensure that their voice was heard and, in the case of the first two groups, to ward off external influences deemed ‘dangerous’ for their faith.<sup>4</sup> Liberal Protestants, De Graaf argued in his 1923 article, were on the whole “more sensible” than those groups, preferring not to separately organise themselves in society, but to collaborate with *all* people, irrespective of religious and political differences of opinion, who pursued the actualisation of the same goal.<sup>5</sup> Associations that were based on similar religious or political principles were connected to each other because they targeted and encompassed the same people, and because there were all kinds of personal connections between them. They collectively formed an institutionalised subculture

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<sup>1</sup> Already in 1907, at the annual NPB meeting, B.D. Eerdmans had made a similar observation: “our age is an age of leagues and associations” (“*onze tijd [is] een tijd [...] van bonden en vereenigingen*”). Quoted from: [B.D. Eerdmans in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering’, *De Hervorming* 1907-43 (26 October 1907), 340-342, there 340; [B.D. Eerdmans in:] *Handelingen NPB* 1907, 12-17, there 12.

<sup>2</sup> “...schrikbarenden...”; “[*Confessioneelen*] kruipen veel meer bij elkaar dan wij.” Quoted from: H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Vereenigingen’, *De Hervorming* 1923-01 (6 January 1923), 3-4, there 3.

<sup>3</sup> The term ‘pillar’ had been in use in government circles already in the 1930s, but was probably first used in public in *De Telegraaf* on 20 February 1940. ‘Pillarisation theories’ were first formulated in the 1950s. See: J.C.H. Blom, *Verzuiling in Nederland en in het bijzonder op lokaal niveau 1850-1925* (Amsterdam 1981), 11.

<sup>4</sup> Pillarisation as such was not a specifically Dutch phenomenon. Elsewhere in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, Roman Catholics in particular began to institutionalise their religious subculture within the emerging civil society. See: J.A. Righart, *De katholieke zuil in Europa. Een vergelijkend onderzoek naar de verzuiling onder katholieken in Oostenrijk, Zwitserland, België en Nederland* (Meppel 1986); S. Hellemans, *Strijd om de moderniteit. Sociale bewegingen en verzuiling in Europa sinds 1800* (Leuven 1990).

<sup>5</sup> “...verstandiger...” Quoted from: H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Vereenigingen’, *De Hervorming* 1923-01 (6 January 1923), 3-4, there 3.

or ‘zuil’ (‘pillar’). The pillarisation paradigm that dominates Dutch historiography as of the 1950s makes a distinction between four pillars: those of the three already-mentioned groups and a ‘neutral’ or ‘general’ one. Although it has come to be hotly debated in recent years to what extent Dutch civil society was ‘pillarised’ from the late nineteenth century until the 1970s and whether it is correct to see social democrat and ‘general’ associations as constituting two genuine pillars,<sup>6</sup> it cannot be denied that there was a high degree of organisational, religion- and politics-based compartmentalisation in the Netherlands when De Graaf wrote his article. De Graaf implied that modernists were against this pillarisation, and so were political liberals. It is therefore not surprising that modernists, rejecting ‘clericalism’ in general, unanimously championed liberal politics before social democracy became an acceptable alternative, and that the majority of them continued to do so afterwards. Because Roman Catholics, the majority of orthodox Protestants and, in some cases, social democrats kept aloof from them, ‘general’ associations, theoretically not based on any political or religious principles and open to all, mostly consisted of members whose politics were liberal and who were religiously liberal or at least abhorred by the neo-Calvinist character of orthodox Protestant organisations.<sup>7</sup>

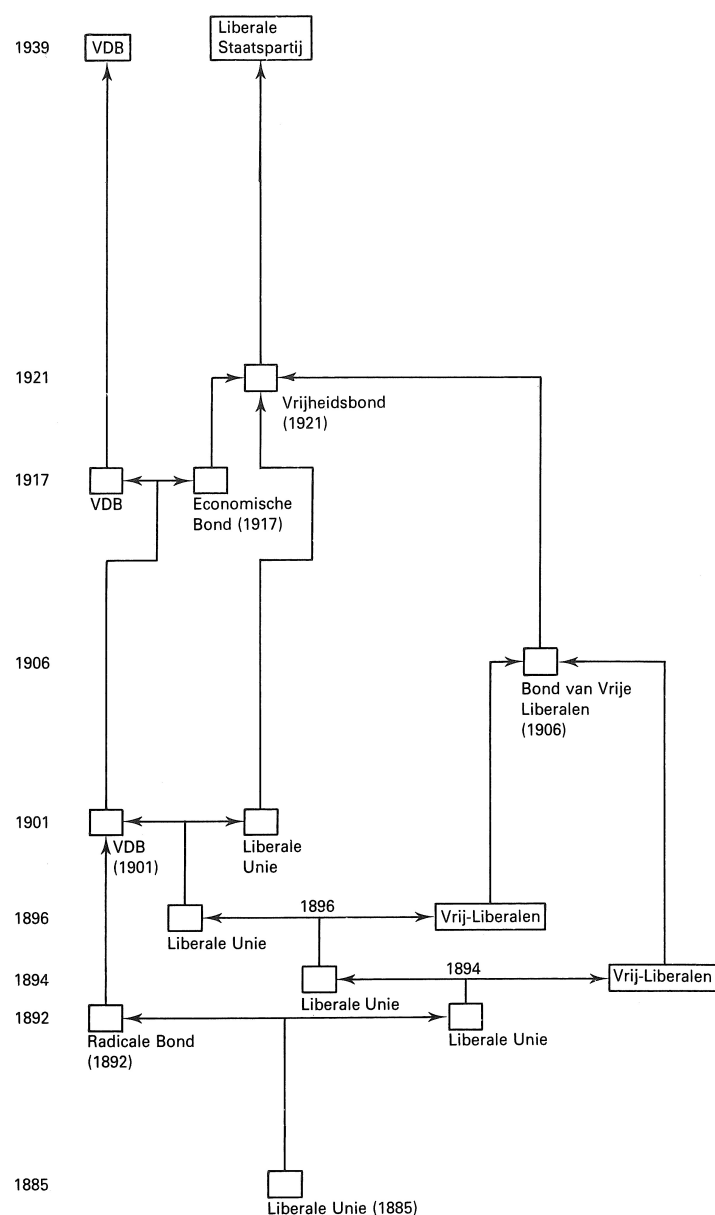
However, dissatisfaction with liberal politics and general associations swelled at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century in the modernist movement, and not only among those who became socialists in a political sense. Although there was much reluctance in the modernist movement to found organisations that were not only meant to defend modernist interests – and as the controversy surrounding the establishment of the *Protestantenbond* proves, even the founding of organisations that did have this aim met with great scepticism –, some historians even see a genuine liberal Protestant ‘pillar’ or something closely resembling a ‘pillar’, emerging in the two decades between the World Wars.<sup>8</sup> Why was this the case? Why

<sup>6</sup> S. Stuurman, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriarchaat. Aspecten van de ontwikkeling van de moderne staat in Nederland* (Nijmegen 1983), 69–71; Blom and Talsma (eds.), *De verzuiling voorbij*; De Rooy, ‘Zes studies over verzuiling’; Van Dam, *Staat van verzuiling*; Van Dam et al., *Achter de zuilen*.

<sup>7</sup> One segment of Dutch Reformed orthodoxy supported Kuiperian politics and participated in the orthodox Protestant pillar, while another segment did not and favoured ‘general’ associations. See: Van Eijnatten and Van Lieburg, *Nederlandse religiegeschiedenis*, 287. D.Th. Kuiper sees the orthodox Protestant ‘pillar’ as a ‘family’ of organisations. Although most of these organisations targeted the orthodox Protestant community at large, in some segments of civil society, there were four ‘options’ orthodox Protestants could choose from: a neo-Calvinist one, centred around the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and the Anti-Revolutionary Party; a Dutch Reformed one, oriented on the *Christelijk-Historische Unie* (Christian Historical Union or CHU); a pietistic Reformed one, clustered around the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten* (Reformed Congregations) and the *Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij* (Political Reformed Party or SGP); and a progressive or dissident one, associated with the Reformed Churches in Restored Union and the Christian Democratic Union. In some segments of society, (parts of) some of these ‘options’ worked together, while in other segments, they did not. For example, some Dutch Reformed voted ARP, others CHU and yet others SGP. Some of those voting CHU supported the *Nederlandsche Christelijke Radio-Vereeniging*, which was also heavily supported by members of the ARP, to which the majority of neo-Calvinists gave their vote. Other CHU sympathisers, however, preferred ‘general’ associations, such as the *Algemeene Vereeniging Radio-Omroep*. This was mostly due to dissatisfaction with the circumstance that neo-Calvinists played first fiddle in the orthodox Protestant ‘family’ of organisations. Most orthodox Protestant organisations, whether targeting first and foremost members of the Reformed Churches or a more general orthodox Protestant audience, undeniably had a neo-Calvinist character. See: Kuiper (De Bruijn, De Bruijn and Schutte eds.), *Tussen observatie en participatie*, 201–202.

<sup>8</sup> Verwey-Jonker, *Emancipatiebewegingen in Nederland*, 88; J.C.H. Blom, “‘Het geloof van de radio op vrijdagavond’”. Aspecten van de geschiedenis van de Vrijzinnig Protestantse Radio Omroep 1926–1968”, in: J.H.J. van den Heuvel et al., *Een vrij zinnige verhouding. De VPRO en Nederland 1926–1986* (Baarn 1986), 73–146, there 84–92; Schuurmsma, *Jaren van opgang*, 191; Barnard, *Van “verstoten kind” tot belijdende kerk*, 306; Van der Meiden, “Zoo heerlijk eenvoudig”, 202; M.B. ter Borg, *Vrijzinnigen hebben de toekomst. Een essay* (Zoetermeer 2010), 98; Vuyk, *Het einde der remonstranten*, 31. Lucardie states that liberal Protestants did not have a genuine pillar of their own;

did some modernists other than those who became socialists begin to feel less pleased with political liberalism and why did the contours of a modernist pillar become visible?



Liberal parties in the Netherlands before the Second World War.

The *Liberale Partij*, created in 1922 as a conservative alternative to the *Vrijheidsbond*, is missing.

Source: Lipschits, *Politieke stromingen in Nederland*, 36.

Just as there were modernist ministers who joined the SDAP, there were also – and more – ministers and other modernist opinion leaders who openly promoted liberal politics, were members of a liberal political party or even represented such a party in municipal councils or parliament. Examples include J. de Louter, A. Bruining and K. Vos (1874-1924), active members of the conservative *Bond van Vrije Liberalen* (League of Free Liberals or BVL); J. van Loenen Martinet

there were only ‘building stones’ for such a pillar. See: A.P.M. Lucardie, *Nederland stromenland. Een geschiedenis van de politieke stromingen* (Assen [1985] 2002), 33. Dutch comedian Wim Kan (1911-1983) said that liberal Protestants formed a “*stokje*” (“stick”) rather than a pillar. Mentioned in: Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering*, 57.

and Ph.A. Kohnstamm (1875-1951), who allied themselves to the progressive *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* (Liberal Democratic League or VDB); and H.Ph. de Kanter, W. de Meijer, P.H. Roessingh (1840-1916) and B.D. Eerdmans, who had all been members of the Second Chamber on behalf of the moderate *Liberale Unie* (Liberal Union). This chapter does not focus on the position they and liberal Protestantism in general had in these parties. Likewise, it does not concern itself with the participation and position of modernists in voluntary associations on a 'neutral' basis, constituting the 'general' pillar, either. As said before, the fact that religious and political liberals were overrepresented in general associations had less to do with the intention of these groups to dominate those associations than with the practice of religious and political non-liberals to found associations exclusively based on their own principles.

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the motivations behind modernist complaints about political liberalism and to argue that this dissatisfaction was part of a larger feeling of discomfort about the direction in which society was developing and the position modernists had in this society. It does so by interpreting discussions on political liberalism and taking five case studies of initiatives, one more successful than the other, intended to organise modernists as a separate group or at least to increase modernists' visibility and influence in certain sectors of society: the Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women, founded in 1886; pleas to found schools on modernist principles; the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Studentenbond* and *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jongerenbond* (Liberal Christian Youth League or VCJB), created in the 1910s; initiatives to link politically liberal modernists more closely together in the 1910s to 1930s, and the *Vrijzinnig-Protestantsche Radio-Omroep* (Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation or VPRO), established in 1926.

## 2. Politically Liberal 'by Nature'

In November 1877, shortly after the inauguration of a new government solely composed of men with liberal political views, a certain 'K.' wrote a lyrical article in *De Hervorming*. Referring to the modernist movement as a monolithic bloc, he stated that modernists were overjoyed and informed the members of the new cabinet that they could be assured of modernists' enduring support and sympathy. "This," he explained,

shall be a surprise to no one. Modernists belong to the liberal party by nature. They want progress and development, and do not shrink from fighting and sacrificing if necessary to achieve the desired goal. The modern state is dear to them and can count on their zeal and power against its enemies, who are out for its destruction. Reforms in accordance with what the present day demands is also our parole, reform in all spheres of civil life.<sup>9</sup>

Ten years later, Ph. Hugenholtz, Jr. repeated the statement that modernists were politically liberal 'by nature'.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, during the formative and earliest development phases of the modernist movement, modernism and political liberalism were seen as two sides of the same coin. In the

<sup>9</sup> "Dit zal niemand bevreemden. De modernen behooren van nature tot de liberale partij. Zij willen vooruitgang en ontwikkeling, en beven voor geen strijd en opoffering terug, waar die gevorderd worden om het beoogde doel te bereiken. De moderne Staat is hun dierbaar en kan op hun ijver en kracht rekenen tegenover de vijanden, die het op zijn ondergang toelagen. Hervorming naar den eisch der tijden is de leus ook van ons, hervorming op ieder gebied van het volksleven." Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Het nieuwe ministerie', *De Hervorming* 1877-46 (17 November 1877), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Mentioned in: Kuiper, 'In het krachtenveld van beschaving en godsdienst', 131.

1870s and 1880s, article writers in *De Hervorming* always used pronouns in the first person plural when they referred to liberalism in a political sense and simply assumed that all modernists had liberal leanings.<sup>11</sup> Dutch Reformed minister A.F. Mackensteen even threw in the lot of modernism as a religious current with that of liberalism; the latter was the political current “that we love” and the *only* political current “of which we expect any good for our country.”<sup>12</sup> J.C. Matthes (1836-1917), an eminent modern theologian who rarely voiced his opinion on non-theological issues, totally agreed: when the liberals lost the by-elections held in several electoral districts in 1885, he stressed that there was a “close connection” between liberal politics and the modernist movement and that “the opportunities for our movement diminish if the political right wing [Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants, TK] gain ground.”<sup>13</sup> Before 1900, political ideas that fell out of line with liberalism were highly controversial in the modernist movement, as the commotion Van Loenen Martinet’s stand against private landownership caused in 1892, dealt with in chapter 7, particularly demonstrates. Making a joke yet actually hitting the mark, Van Loenen Martinet reacted that he was only allowed to address political issues in *De Hervorming* if he docilely followed “the direction mapped out by the Liberal Union.”<sup>14</sup>

The Liberal Union was founded in 1885 with the intention of tightening the bonds among all politicians who identified as liberals and hence to bring the rise of Roman Catholics’ and orthodox Protestants’ political influence to a halt. Feeling that voting rights and social legislation should be extended as soon as possible, a group of progressive dissidents left the union in 1892 and 1901. They established the Liberal Democratic League in 1901. A second group, consisting of conservative liberals who opposed party discipline, any enlargement of government power and general enfranchisement, began to secede from the union from 1894 onwards and created the League of Free Liberals in 1906. With the implementation of universal suffrage at the end of the 1910s, leading to a spectacular marginalisation of liberalism as a political current – the Liberal Union alone lost fifteen of its twenty-one seats in parliament –, reunification became a strong desire among liberals. While the VDB kept itself apart, the Liberal Union and the BVL merged, together with several recently founded, liberal-oriented splinter parties, into the *Liberale Staatpartij ‘de Vrijheidsbond’* (Liberal State Party ‘the Freedom League’) in 1921.<sup>15</sup> As said before, all of these parties received significant support from modernists.

Modernists who turned away from liberalism, as well as later generations of modernists, acknowledged that their co-religionists’ solidarity with political liberalism had been so strong in the nineteenth century that the general public still identified the modernist movement in its

<sup>11</sup> E.g.: [B.C.J. Mosselmans and J. van Gilse], ‘10 Juni 1873’, *De Hervorming* 1873-23 (5 June 1873), 1; J. van Gilse, ‘Wat de “Hervorming” weet’, *Ibid.* 1875-30 (29 July 1875), 1-2; R., ‘Het recht der minderheid’, *Ibid.* 1877-23 (9 June 1877), 1-2, there 1; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Nieuwe bezwaren aan de neutraliteit der openbare school ontleend’, *Ibid.* 1881-26 (2 July 1881), 102-103, there 103; H.S., ‘Binnenland – Meditatie’, *Ibid.* 1883-35 (1 September 1883), 139; H. de Lang, “‘Uilenspiegel’”, *Ibid.* 1893-10 (11 March 1893), 38. See also: A.D.H. Huysman, ‘Godsdienstige vrijzinnigheid en politiek liberalisme (1840-1940)’, *Civis Mundi* XXVII.2 (1988), 70-73, there 70-71; Krijger, ‘Een vrijzinnige meneer’, 51-52.

<sup>12</sup> “...de liberale rigting die we liefhebben, en van welke we alleen heil verwachten voor ons vaderland...” Quoted from: A.F. Mackensteen, ‘Kroniek’, *De Hervorming* 1874-28 (9 July 1874), 1-2, there 2.

<sup>13</sup> “...dat er een nauwe samenhang is tusschen beide en dat de kansen onzer richting minder worden, naarmate de rechterzijde meer terrein veroverd.” Quoted from: [J.C. Matthes], ‘Lichtpunten’, *Ibid.* 1885-17 (25 April 1885), 65-66, there 65.

<sup>14</sup> “...de richting door de liberale Unie aangegeven.” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Over den bijzonderen grondeigendom’, *Ibid.* 1892-41 (8 October 1892), 162-163, there 162.

<sup>15</sup> Lipschits, *Politieke stromingen in Nederland*, 33-39.

entirety with liberal politics.<sup>16</sup> At a meeting of modernists in the province of North Holland in 1909, J.T. Tenthoff lamented that this was the main reason why blue-collar workers' estrangement from the modernist movement was so enduring.<sup>17</sup> In 1926, G.J. Heering passed an equally negative judgement by mockingly describing the decades prior to 1900 as "[those] happy times, when every religious liberal was automatically a political liberal."<sup>18</sup>

Even after socialism had become an acceptable political alternative to liberalism in the modernist movement, in the 1900s and 1910s, the grand majority of modernists could still be counted among the champions of liberal politics.<sup>19</sup> In 1917, K. Vos estimated that ninety percent of all who identified as liberal Protestants did not have socialist political views – which meant that, considering modernists' dislike of political parties based on dogmatic religious principles, "far more than ninety per cent firmly cling to the old liberal traditions," as K.H. Roessingh remarked in 1925.<sup>20</sup> Particularly in response to socialist modernists' claim that socialism was the true political fulfilment of Christianity, some continued to defend that liberal Protestantism and liberal politics 'naturally' belonged together. Because the liberals' political principles – summed up in the word 'freedom' – were more in line with the spirit of Jesus than the political principles of those who explicitly adorned their politics with his name, as modernist Reformed minister P. Bruining (1850-1945) maintained in his 1906 brochure *De politiek-vrijzinnigen en het christendom* (*The Political Liberals and Christianity*), the cause liberal politicians defended was essentially a *religious* cause. As the latter tried to realise in the political domain what modernists tried to realise through their religious faith, both groups formed a 'natural' alliance.<sup>21</sup> Without breaking a lance for liberal politics as such, M.C. van Mourik Broekman reasoned in 1918 that it was perfectly natural that "modernism as a religious movement has historically and psychologically allied itself to liberalism as a current in the world of thoughts," for both were essentially individual-centred.<sup>22</sup> D. Hans, an influential journalist who sympathised with the Liberal State Party and chaired the NPB branch in The Hague between 1928 and 1945, pursued this line of reasoning. Most people only used 'liberalism' in a political sense, referring to a current that sought the actualisation of 'democracy', which Hans defined

<sup>16</sup> In 1895, Van Loenen Martinet was one of the first to see that the time in which modernists blindly followed liberal politicians was disappearing. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Politieke preeken', *De Hervorming* 1895-12 (23 March 1895), 46.

<sup>17</sup> [J.T. Tenthoff in:] 'Berichten, enz. – De Noord-Hollandsche Predikantenvereeniging', *Ibid.* 1909-27 (3 July 1909), 213-214; J.T. Tenthoff, 'De reactionaire strooming onder de protestanten, hare oorzaken en hare beteekenis voor het innerlijk en uiterlijk godsdienstig leven', *Teekenen des Tijds* XI (1909), 233-262, there 255-256.

<sup>18</sup> "Gelukkige tijd, toen ieder vrijzinnig-godsdienstige per se liberaal was!" Quoted from: G.J. Heering, 'Sociale en a-sociale religie', *De Hervorming* 1926-43 (23 October 1926), 340-341, there 341.

<sup>19</sup> Roessingh, *Het modernisme in Nederland*, 208; Verwey-Jonker, *Emancipatiebewegingen in Nederland*, 87; Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 53.

<sup>20</sup> K. Vos, 'Ingezonden – Teekenen des tijds', *De Hervorming* 1917-50 (15 December 1917), 419-420, there 419. "...ver over de 90 pct. blijft immers in de vaste lijn der oude liberale tradities." Quoted from: K.H. Roessingh, 'Jeugdbewegingen vrijzinnigheid', *Ibid.* 1925-04 (24 January 1925), 26-27, there 26. Notwithstanding modernists' categorical rejection of confessional politics, a tiny minority eventually came to support the Christian Historical Union, in which (moderate) Dutch Reformed orthodoxy set the tone. See: Van Driel, 'Hand in hand?', 132. H.T. de Graaf stated that he felt sympathy for the CHU, but could not support it, as this party interpreted religion too narrowly in an orthodox sense and favoured private schools based on orthodox Protestant principles. See: H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Van de stembus', *De Hervorming* 1922-23 (10 June 1922), 179-181, there 179.

<sup>21</sup> P. Bruining, *De politiek-vrijzinnigen en het christendom* (Almelo [1906]).

<sup>22</sup> "...aangezien het modernisme als geloofsrichting steeds historisch en psychologisch zich aangesloten heeft bij het liberalisme als geestesrichting." Quoted from: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Her-ijk', *De Hervorming* 1918-29 (20 July 1918), 113.

as the liberation of individuals from all obstacles hindering them from being truly free. Therefore, liberal politicians were sceptical about government interference in society, but at the same time felt that some social laws were needed. After all, individuals could only become *personalities*, autonomous beings who lived up to their full potential, if they were not totally preoccupied with earning their daily bread. Yet, liberalism not only manifested itself as a political current; it was a distinct world view and philosophy of life, in which the intrinsic value of the individual personality was central. Spiritually, Hans claimed, liberalism manifested itself as liberal Protestantism. Liberal politics attempted to create the necessary conditions for ‘democracy’, while liberal Protestantism attempted to do justice to the individual personality and hence to instil individuals with a ‘democratic spirit’. In other words, liberal politics and liberal Protestantism were both manifestations of this one philosophy of life called ‘liberalism’.<sup>23</sup>

Being founded on the ideas of philosophers such as John Locke (1632-1704) and Montesquieu (1689-1755), who championed the emancipation of civilians from state churches and absolute monarchy, and the theories of economists such as Adam Smith (1723-1790), Thomas Malthus (1766-1834) and David Ricardo (1772-1823), who rejected strong government interference in economic life at both the national level (*laissez-faire*) and the international level (free trade), liberalism was already an established and influential current in politics when the modernist movement emerged. That liberalism and modernism in the Netherlands became closely linked immediately after the rise of the latter, had to do, Van Driel briefly describes, with three factors.<sup>24</sup> First, there were ties between several liberal politicians and prominent modernist families. Second, political liberalism and liberal Protestantism both had their (largest) following among the bourgeoisie and farmers. These last two terms are not specified by Van Driel, but particularly the term ‘farmers’ needs some explanation. In the early nineteenth century, parts of the moneyed bourgeois elite in urban areas and large landowners in rural regions developed a civil culture of which political liberalism and a non-dogmatic approach to Christianity were constitutive elements.<sup>25</sup> Parts of the petty bourgeoisie or lower middle class and parts of the farming class oriented themselves on this politically and religiously liberal culture of the groups directly above them, as liberalism best served their economic interests and social aspirations. In rural areas, where the bourgeoisie was small or absent, an agrarian equivalent to the bourgeoisie emerged, similar in status and wealth to the urban middle class. Liberalism and modernism found support among *those* farmers – not among the so-called ‘peasantry’ or agricultural equivalent to the industrial proletariat.<sup>26</sup> Third, Van Driel states that political liberalism and liberal Protestantism

<sup>23</sup> [D. Hans in:] ‘Berichten en mededeelingen – Liberalisme en democratie’, *Ibid.* 1931-04 (11 April 1931), 29-30. Hans put forward the same arguments in: D. Hans, *Liberalisme en protestantisme. Iets over het verband tusschen de staatkundig-liberale beginselen en de religie* (The Hague 1930), 31-51.

<sup>24</sup> In France and Switzerland, liberal Protestants championed liberal politics as well. In Germany, on the other hand, they were politically rather conservative and in favour of a strong state. In the *fin-de-siècle* era, a segment of liberal Protestants in the Anglo-Saxon world, in Switzerland and in Germany embraced Christian socialism. There is an obvious parallel here with the Dutch situation, which needs to be examined in closer detail in future studies.

<sup>25</sup> Another part was religiously orthodox and politically conservative.

<sup>26</sup> V.C. Sleebe, *In termen van fatsoen. Sociale controle in het Groningse kleigebied 1770-1914* (Assen 1994), 54; Y. Botke, *Boer en heer. De ‘Groninger boer’ 1760-1960* (Assen 2002), 10, 364-366; P.J. van Cruyningen, *Boeren aan de macht? Boerenemancipatie en machtsverhoudingen op het Gelderse platteland, 1880-1930* (Hilversum 2010), 196-202. Te Velde argues that modernism and political liberalism became entangled, because both groups were “first and foremost movements of the bourgeoisie” (“...in de eerste plaats bewegingen van de burgerij”). See: H. te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbesef. Liberalisme en nationalisme in Nederland* (The Hague 1992), 39.



shared a strong belief in reason and progress, stressed the value of the individual personality and appealed to individuals' moral sense. They hence advanced each other's development and growth.<sup>27</sup>

Political scientist Stuurman feels that political liberalism and liberal Protestantism were tied together to such an extent and with such endurance that, rejecting the notion of a neutral or general pillar, it is justified to discern a '*liberaal-vrijzinnige sfeer*' ('liberal-modernist sphere') next to the Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant pillars and the socialist movement in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>28</sup> Although, as this chapter argues, such an unproblematic equating of liberalism with modernism obscures dissatisfaction within the modernist movement with liberal politics and the formally 'neutral' organisations ranged under this 'liberal-modernist sphere', a closer look at liberal political culture does show that views dominant in this culture were also dominant in modernism. It hence explains why liberalism exerted such an attraction on modernists, both in the late nineteenth and in the early twentieth century.

Until the rise of social democracy, liberalism was the most progressive political current.<sup>29</sup> Conservatism opposed sweeping institutional state reform and disappeared in the Dutch context as a distinct political current at the end of the nineteenth century. The emerging anti-revolutionary and Roman Catholic political currents rejected the notion of popular sovereignty and were based on the idea that society should not be organised in opposition to the 'organic' structures God had implanted in His Creation. Liberalism, on the other hand, aspired to reform society in such a way that the individual had as much freedom as possible to organise his own life without violating the freedom of other individuals.<sup>30</sup> This did not mean that all liberal politicians thought the same about the speed and intensity with which, for example, voting rights should be extended or social laws should be promulgated – certainly not, as the ultimate trichotomy of liberalism into progressive, moderate and conservative parties evinces –, but they were all essentially driven by this ideal of individual freedom.<sup>31</sup> As such, liberalism was the political manifestation

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<sup>27</sup> Van Driel, 'Hand in hand?', 107. Van Driel bases his third argument on literature that modernists with liberal leanings have written in the 1930s. At the time, it was far from self-evident in the modernist movement to defend that liberal Protestantism and political liberalism essentially had a "similar spiritual structure," as Van Driel does. (Socialist modernists would never acknowledge this.) Moreover, the faith in reason, the belief in progress and individual-centredness eventually weakened, especially due to the rise of malcontentism around 1900. Van Driel's third argument therefore largely applies to *early* modernism only.

<sup>28</sup> Stuurman, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriarchaat*, 60; F.A. Groot, *Roomsen, rechtzinnigen en nieuwlichters. Verzuiling in een Hollandse plattelandsgemeente, Naaldwijk 1850-1930* (Hilversum 1992), 248.

<sup>29</sup> Of course, everything said below about liberalism is an ideal type. Liberalism in 1870 was not the same as liberalism in 1920. Moreover, liberalism comprised a whole range of ideas – on certain topics, ideas of the one liberal could even contradict those of another. Yet, on the whole, there were ideological features all liberals had in common. It is this 'common denominator' upon which the paragraphs below expound.

<sup>30</sup> Conservatism as a current melted into the BVL and the CHU. See: R.A.A.G.M. van Raak, *In naam van het volmaakte. Conservatisme in Nederland in de negentiende eeuw van Gerrit Jan Mulder tot Jan Heemskerk Azn.* (Amsterdam 2001), 185-188. In 1894, the anti-revolutionary current split in half due to dissatisfaction with Kuyper's leadership and differences of opinion on voting rights and the nature of Dutch society: the part following Kuyper kept the name 'anti-revolutionary' and had a neo-Calvinist majority, while the other part, mostly supported by moderately orthodox Dutch Reformed with rather conservative-liberal political convictions, adopted the name 'free anti-revolutionary' or 'Christian historical', as of 1908 only using the latter. See: T.E.M. Krijger, 'Een veldheer met vele legers. De partijpolitieke erfenis van Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer', *Trajecta* XXIV.1 (2015), 85-120, there 93-95.

<sup>31</sup> Moreover, this did not mean that all liberals were champions of democracy as a political system. There was much reluctance among liberals to grant voting rights to the class below the bourgeoisie. Moreover, parliamentary democracy as such became nearly unchallenged in liberal circles only around 1910. See: K.E. van der Mandele, *Het*

of the emancipation of the bourgeoisie that had set in with the French Revolution of 1789. It served bourgeois interests by breaking the power of the old first and second estates, the aristocracy and the clergy, at the beginning of the nineteenth century and thereby paving the way for a civil culture in which the bourgeoisie set the standard from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.<sup>32</sup>

Although they did not reject state intervention in social life altogether –the progressive liberal undercurrent emerging in the 1870s was particularly open to government measures intended to counteract pauperism –, liberals gave preference to private enterprise.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, all arrangements made to improve the lives of lower-class people, whether in the form of legislation or philanthropy, should always be aimed at making the poor and needy independent of material support from others. They ought to turn the poor and needy into *individuals* who were capable of making conscious and reasonable decisions, into *civilians* who were able to restrain themselves and to live a life just as ‘virtuous’ and ‘refined’ as the higher classes.<sup>34</sup> It was the moral duty of the bourgeoisie to assist the poor and needy in becoming such self-responsible civilians. In practice, this meant imparting bourgeois manners, norms and beliefs about ‘proper’ behaviour to the lower classes. ‘*Fatsoen*’ (‘respectability’ or ‘decency’) was a central notion in bourgeois culture. As historian Leenders shows, it came to express what being a ‘civilian’ was all about from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.<sup>35</sup> A liberal outlook on life and a liberal world view were seen as intrinsic elements of being ‘decent’. Although some of them came to contend around 1900 that morality should be a subject of political debate, liberals, contradicting confessionalists, argued that decency as such was no subject of concern for the government. What was considered ‘decent’ should be decided within society itself and promoted through initiatives civilians created themselves.<sup>36</sup> Of course, this meant that the culturally dominant liberal bourgeoisie both had the power to decide and the responsibility to promote what was ‘decent’. It effectuated the latter through all kinds of voluntary associations.

In this respect, recent historiography often uses the term ‘*beschavingsoffensief*’ (‘civilising offensive’), defined as “more or less resolute activities to change the values, conventions and behaviours of certain population groups through social control.”<sup>37</sup> Liberals were certainly not the only ones undertaking such activities. Orthodox Protestants united in the rather elitist mid-nineteenth-century *Réveil* movement, for example, created initiatives to disseminate their moral norms and ideas about respectability among the lower classes as well.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, during the process of pillarisation, which intensified after 1900, a discourse on

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*liberalisme in Nederland. Schets van de ontwikkeling in de negentiende eeuw* (Arnhem 1933), 206-237; Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbefef*, 190-191; De Beaufort and Van Schie, *Sociaal-liberalisme*, 21-22.

<sup>32</sup> Blaas, *De burgerlijke eeuw*, 77-80.

<sup>33</sup> De Beaufort and Van Schie, *Sociaal-liberalisme*, 39-56.

<sup>34</sup> Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbefef*, 105-106.

<sup>35</sup> J.M.M. Leenders, *Benauwde verdraagzaamheid, hachelijk fatsoen. Families, standen en kerken te Hoorn in het midden van de negentiende eeuw* (The Hague 1991), 239-241.

<sup>36</sup> Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbefef*, 185-189, 205-206.

<sup>37</sup> “...min of meer doelbewuste activiteiten om via sociale controle het normen- en waardenstelsel en gedragspatroon van bepaalde bevolkingsgroepen te wijzigen.” Sleebe gives an informative overview of the historiography on this ‘civilising offensive’. He acknowledges that the term has its flaws, but thinks it is a useful term nonetheless. See: Sleebe, *In termen van fatsoen*, 27-31. The quote is on p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> W.J. Hoekstra, *Het hart van de natie. Morele verontwaardiging en politieke verandering in Nederland, 1870-1919* (Amsterdam 2005), 112. Dubois challenges this. According to him, speaking about the *Réveil* movement in terms of ‘civilisation’ obscures that this movement primarily aimed to bring people to Christ. See: O.W. Dubois, *Reddende liefde. Het werk van de Heldringstichtingen in Zetten 1847-2010* (Hilversum 2010), 19-20.

civilisation was common as well. The Catholic clergy and orthodox Protestant ministers, some historians argue, used the emerging pillars as means to establish social control among the faithful, as well as to discipline the faithful and ultimately the entire nation, in accordance with church morals.<sup>39</sup> Socialist leaders' political mobilisation of the working class was accompanied by an attempt to educate labourers and to bring about a working-class socialist culture in which teetotalism, self-control, frugality and domesticity were key values.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, the term 'civilising offensive' is mostly used exclusively in reference to philanthropical initiatives and voluntary associations that were not created by the government and not explicitly linked to one denomination or based on specific theological-dogmatic principles, intended to uplift the dregs of society, and supported by the politically liberal-oriented bourgeoisie in the nineteenth century. The most pre-eminent representative of this nineteenth-century liberal-bourgeois civilising offensive is the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen*.<sup>41</sup> Founded in 1784, this society aimed to spread the newest ideas and ideals concerning social hygiene and personal development among those who did not have the means or capacities to pick up these ideas and ideals on their own. Associations such as the *Nut* tried to turn lower-class people into decent 'civilians', in order to foster a sense of civic self-responsibility or 'community spirit and a sense of duty', by teaching them how to think and behave as the classes above them.<sup>42</sup> Although their principles were not rooted in a specific theological system, these associations were dominated by adherents of rationalistic supernaturalism at the beginning of the nineteenth century, primarily supported by the Groningen movement in the middle of that century, and increasingly joined by modernists as of the 1860s. At the local level, members of the NPB, the *Nut* and liberal electoral associations often formed a tight network. In some places, the local department of the *Nut* was even at the basis of the local branch of the NPB.<sup>43</sup>

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the civilising offensive served one particular interest of the central government: it promoted national unification. The Netherlands had only recently become a unitary state. Before 1795, the Dutch regions had been loosely allied to each other in a confederate republic and had enjoyed a large degree of legislative and judicial self-determination. That year, a central government was created that, influenced by and as of 1806 directly controlled by France, tried to instil the inhabitants of Friesland, Holland, Gelderland and the other Dutch regions with a nationalistic-ethnic sense of belonging together in order to establish its authority. When the former Austrian Netherlands, the present-day regions of Flanders and Wallonia, were added to the old Dutch Republic in 1815, the need for such a

<sup>39</sup> Sleebe, *In termen van fatsoen*, 29; P.C.M. Bakker, J.M.A. Noordman and M. Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland. Idee en praktijk, 1500-2000* (Assen 2006), 234-237.

<sup>40</sup> Te Velde, 'How High did the Dutch Fly?', 72-75; F.W. Boterman and P. de Rooy, *Op de grens van twee culturen. Nederland en Duitsland in het fin de siècle* (Amsterdam 1999), 35.

<sup>41</sup> Kruithof, 'De deugdzame natie', 70; W.W. Mijnhardt and A.J. Wichers, *Om het algemeen volksgeluk. Twee eeuwen particulier initiatief, 1784-1984: gedenkboek ter gelegenheid van het tweehonderdjarig bestaan van de Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* (Edam 1984); Bakker, Noordman and Rietveld-van Wingerden, *Vijf eeuwen opvoeden in Nederland*, 196; Mijnhardt, however, is reluctant to refer to the activities of the Society for Public Advancement with the term 'civilising offensive', as it suggests that the *Nut* simply treated the lowest classes as passive 'receivers' of knowledge. See: W.W. Mijnhardt, *Tot heil van 't menschdom. Culturele genootschappen in Nederland, 1750-1815* (Amsterdam 1987), 293-294.

<sup>42</sup> The terms 'community spirit' and 'sense of duty' as characterisation of the liberal-bourgeois civilising offensive refer to the title of Te Velde's 1992 dissertation *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbeseft*.

<sup>43</sup> As stated in chapter 1.

sense of belonging became even more pressing. The central government attempted to create a 'Netherlandic' identity to make sure that all inhabitants of what was now called the 'United Kingdom of the Netherlands' would loyally support it. It stimulated Dutch Reformed ministers and the *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* to actively propagate patriotism and social stability.<sup>44</sup> After the secession of Flanders and Wallonia from the Netherlands in 1830, which meant that the project to unify the historical Low Countries in a single nation-state had failed, 'volksseenheid' ('national unity') nonetheless remained a strong motive behind the liberal-bourgeois civilising offensive.<sup>45</sup> Because they considered pauperism, immorality and a lack of education to be potential threats to civil harmony, political liberals stimulated private enterprises such as the *Nut* to help those suffering from these evils in becoming tolerant, decent and self-supporting civilians. They feared that if social changes occurred in the form of revolutionary radicalism rather than evolutionary reform, all kinds of forces would be unleashed in the lowest strata of society that could not be stopped and would ultimately disrupt society in its entirety. Political liberals regarded religious fanaticism as a threat to civil harmony as well. Although they felt that state interference in social life should be limited, and although it had been a liberal politician, J.R. Thorbecke, who had included the possibility of founding denominational schools in his 1848 constitutional reform, political liberals themselves therefore favoured neutral state or public schools. They feared that education based on dogmatic principles would increase social tensions and favoured government policy that gave preferential financial treatment to public schools.<sup>46</sup> As Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants, contrariwise, demanded an equal treatment of public and denominational education, a fierce conflict of interests, known as the 'school struggle', was rampant in Dutch politics, which ended in a confessionalist victory only in 1917.

Nineteenth-century political liberals advocated a '*christendom boven geloofsverdeeldheid*' ('Christianity above religious differences'), being what would nowadays perhaps best be called a 'public religion' – a general belief in God and general behavioural norms seen as intrinsic to the Christian tradition, such as a tolerant attitude towards people with different beliefs and a strong desire to serve the community, as the cement of social life.<sup>47</sup> In this public religion, what the nature of God is and what exactly constitutes the Christian tradition should be intentionally unspecified, in the hope that no one would take umbrage at it and almost all citizens could identify with it. Roman Catholics and anti-revolutionaries, however, felt nothing for such a vague interpretation of Christianity – rather, they envisaged a pluralistic society in which citizens were not forced to act as if all Dutch thought, worshipped and aspired the same. Their growing influence in politics and society, fuelled by the 'school struggle', therefore made liberals shiver.<sup>48</sup> Modernists, though only sporadically describing their aspiration to permeate society with an 'updated' Christianity in those exact same words, more or less shared liberals'

<sup>44</sup> Bijleveld, *Voor God, volk en vaderland*, 36, 93, 142, 162-164; Th.H.G. Verhoeven, *Ter vorming van verstand en hart. Lager onderwijs in oostelijk Noord-Brabant, ca. 1770-1920* (Hilversum 1994), 19.

<sup>45</sup> Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbef*, 15, 19-30.

<sup>46</sup> Van der Mandele, *Het liberalisme in Nederland*, 184-195; P.Th.F.M. Boekholt, 'Naar een gedifferentieerd onderwijssysteem, 1860-1920', in: P.Th.F.M. Boekholt and E.P. de Booy, *Geschiedenis van de school in Nederland vanaf de middeleeuwen tot aan de huidige tijd* (Assen 1987), 149-228, there 149, 221; R. de Jong, *Van standspolitiek naar partijloyaliteit. Verkiezingen voor de Tweede Kamer 1848-1887* (Hilversum 1999), 131.

<sup>47</sup> The term is usually attributed to Thorbecke and specifically used in relation to public education.

<sup>48</sup> Liberals considered one's theological viewpoints as a strictly private affair. See: Aerts, *De letterheren*, 197.

ideal of a ‘Christianity above religious differences’; they too felt that opposing theological views and ecclesial heterogeneity should be irrelevant in social life.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, their ‘enemies’ in the sphere of church and religion were the same against whom liberals fought in the political arena. Although some early modernists, among them C.W. Opzoomer, argued that the state should have the authority to supervise church life, primarily to prevent the Roman Catholic Church and orthodox Protestants from accentuating dogmatic differences of opinion existing among Dutch citizens, the feeling that state and church should be entirely separate was dominant in the modernist movement.<sup>50</sup> And although some of its adherents reasoned similarly as Opzoomer, political liberalism as such used ‘the separation of church and state’ as one of its battle cries: the government and state-financed institutions, such as public schools and universities, including theological faculties, should be ‘neutral’ in the sense that they should not favour one philosophy of life over others.<sup>51</sup>

### 3. Non-Socialist Modernist Criticism on Political Liberalism

Politically liberal discourse thus bore a great deal of resemblance to modernist discourse. Yet, there were concerns among modernists that liberal politicians tended to interpret the separation of church and state as a separation of religion and society. Moreover, the ‘Christianity above religious differences’ liberal politicians claimed to advocate often looked as religious indifference in modernists’ eyes. As early as the 1870s, such complaints could be heard. In 1873, for example, A.F. Mackenstein, who believed that the future of modernism depended on liberals’ political power, denounced “the awful faintness of many liberals.”<sup>52</sup> Political liberals tried to uplift the nation, but, as their fellow liberal H.Ph. de Kanter argued in 1875, they failed to see that the pre-eminent instrument to do so was the Dutch Reformed Church and that they should therefore make common cause with modernists. It was due to their “reprehensible, constant, dreadful indifference in ecclesial affairs” that the Dutch Reformed Church was falling prey to orthodoxy and was hence on its way to becoming totally useless for uplifting the nation.<sup>53</sup> A year later, De Kanter urged all political liberal candidates to make clear whether religion had any political meaning to them or not and asserted that they only deserved modernists’ support if they gave an affirmative answer.<sup>54</sup> In his 1877 article in which he claimed modernists were politically liberal ‘by nature’, even the aforementioned ‘K.’ argued that liberals did not deserve modernists’ support unconditionally: “[liberals] feel that the state should be religionless. [...] We can understand, not share this opinion. We can understand it, as liberals confuse religion

<sup>49</sup> Te Velde, *Gemeenschapzin en plichtsbef*, 38-41.

<sup>50</sup> C.W. Opzoomer, *Scheiding van kerk en staat* (Amsterdam 1875). Opzoomer was challenged in: L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, *Staat en kerk. Het stelsel van mr. C.W. Opzoomer bestreden* (Leiden 1875). See also: Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 141.

<sup>51</sup> Van der Mandele, *Het liberalisme in Nederland*, 173-177.

<sup>52</sup> “...de ellendige flauwheid van vele liberalen.” Quoted from: A.F. Mackenstein, ‘Kroniek’, *De Hervorming* 1873-28 (10 July 1873), 3.

<sup>53</sup> “...hun laakbare, onveranderlijke, ellendige onverschilligheid in kerkelijke zaken...” Quoted from: A.B., ‘Vooruitzichten der godsdienst’, *Ibid.* 1875-27 (8 July 1875), 1-2, there 2.

<sup>54</sup> [H.Ph. de Kanter in:] ‘Mededeelingen betreffende het Nederlandsch Protestantenvond’, *Ibid.* 1876-11 (16 March 1876), 3. Goeman Borgesius strongly condemned this. Judging candidates by their principles of life was exactly what confessionalists did. Political candidates should only be judged by their *political* views and intellectual capacities. During the 1876 annual NPB meeting, De Kanter, together with I. Hooykaas, again blamed his fellow liberals for their religious indifference. See: [I. Hooykaas and H.Ph. de Kanter in:] ‘Protestantendag’, *Ibid.* 1876-49 (7 December 1876), 2-4, there 3.

with the church.” A couple of lines earlier in this same article, ‘K.’ chided liberals for deluding themselves by not realising that “it is a lie that the state has nothing to do with religion – on the contrary, social life should be permeated with and guided by religion in its entirety and the state should do its bit [to accomplish that].”<sup>55</sup>

Similar sentiments increased and were uttered more often from the 1880s onwards – not only by modernists who felt attracted to socialism or eventually joined the SDAP, but also by those who continued to loyally support liberal politicians. At a meeting of ministers in the Alkmaar region in 1884, for example, the Dutch Reformed F. Pijper (1859-1926) noticed with regret that some liberal politicians tried to make it legally impossible for ministers to be politically active. This was the result of a misinterpretation of what a separation between church and state entailed, and was all the more lamentable, as the modernists among ministers with political aspirations wanted precisely to reinforce the liberal ranks. Moreover, Pijper regretted that liberals habitually refrained from differentiating between orthodox and modernist Christianity and in some cases even had an undisguised contempt for religious outlooks on life altogether. His lecture brought dissension among the modernist ministers present at the meeting into the open: some, fearing that liberalism would otherwise turn into confessionalism, argued that religion should stay out of political life, while others, seeing political life as an integral part of social life in general, asserted that it should also permeate politics.<sup>56</sup> One of the latter, E.J.W. Koch, therefore applauded the initiative several modernist members of an electoral committee in Brielle took later that year to only nominate a liberal who actively participated in the modernist movement.<sup>57</sup>

When the *Doleantie* erupted in 1886, Van Loenen Martinet reasoned that Kuyper and his sympathisers had been able to gain an influential position in church, state and society because liberal politicians had grossly underestimated the potential that religion had as a mobilising force. Liberal politicians had made the mistake of merely dismissing confessionalism without promoting a better – that is, modernist – religious alternative.<sup>58</sup> Van Loenen Martinet and others would later put forward this argument several times.<sup>59</sup> H.Ph. de Kanter felt that modernists should also acknowledge blame themselves: the modernist movement would have been considerably more influential in society if they had not categorically allied themselves to a liberalism characterised by religious indifference.<sup>60</sup> He implied that modernists should have been more critical of liberalism not only as a political current, but also as a *culture*. Modernists

<sup>55</sup> “Zij houden het er voor, dat de Staat godsdienstloos moet zijn [...] Wij kunnen die meening begrijpen, niet deelen. Begrijpen als eene verwarring van godsdienst en kerk [...]”; “Het is [...] een leugen, dat de Staat niets met den godsdienst te maken zou hebben; integendeel, het geheele maatschappelijke leven moet door den godsdienst worden beziel en geleid, en ook de Staat heeft daartoe het zijne te doen.” Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Het nieuwe ministerie’, *Ibid.* 1877-46 (17 November 1877), 1.

<sup>56</sup> [F. Pijper in: S.P. Heringa], ‘Binnenland – Welke houding behoort de vrijzinnige predikant aan te nemen ten opzichte van het antireligieuze karakter van veler liberale politiek?’, *Ibid.* 1884-04 (26 January 1884), 14.

<sup>57</sup> E.J.W. Koch, ‘Religieusiteit in den volksvertegenwoordiger onmisbaar’, *Ibid.* 1884-43 (25 October 1884), 171-172.

<sup>58</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Juist ter snede’, *Ibid.* 1886-04 (23 January 1886), 14.

<sup>59</sup> L.M.B., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1888-01 (7 January 1888), 4; C.B. Spruyt, ‘Scheiding van kerk en staat’, *Ibid.* 1888-08 (25 February 1888), 30; B. Tideman Jz., ‘De fout der oud-liberalen’, *Ibid.* 1889-11 (16 March 1889), 41-42; [J. van Loenen Martinet in:] ‘De Protestantendag te Deventer’, *Ibid.* 1889-44 (2 November 1889), 174; Censor [A. Carlier] and H. de Lang, ‘De schoolkwestie’, *Ibid.* 1901-10 (9 March 1901), 75-76; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Godsdienst en politiek’, *Ibid.* 1901-32 (10 August 1901), 249-250; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Onder ongunstige omstandigheden’, *Ibid.* 1903-40 (3 October 1903), 316-317, there 316.

<sup>60</sup> H.Ph. de Kanter, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Replik’, *Ibid.* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 87-88, there 87 [erroneously, he is referred to as ‘H.Th. de Kanter’].

fully contributed to the liberal-bourgeois civilising offensive, but felt that it was not enough to help people in becoming autonomous civilians – creating autonomous *religious* civilians was their ultimate aim.<sup>61</sup> After all, decency, as explained in chapter 6, was seen as inherently connected to reasonableness and piety in modernist thinking. As the controversy on district nursing exemplifies, there was much reluctance among modernists to organise themselves as a separate group outside of the domain of the church – after all, organised activities in which lower-class people received guidance from the bourgeois classes ought not to be conducted with the intention of turning the former into religious liberals as such. Nonetheless, modernists did hope that such activities would implicitly advance the free development of religious life – having contact with ‘spiritual aristocrats’, they believed, would ultimately not misfire. Yet, as Van Loenen Martinet stated in 1895, the feeling that liberalism had not always been beneficial to the advancement of the free development of religious life had taken root among modernists.<sup>62</sup> L. Knappert, sharing this feeling, fulminated that modernists were “sick and tired” of liberal leaders such as Samuel van Houten (1837-1930) who ridiculed and thwarted their aspiration to Christianise society.<sup>63</sup>

In the early twentieth century, when the subcultures of Roman Catholics and neo-Calvinists became ever more institutionalised, modernist fingers continued to be wagged at liberals. Notwithstanding his liberal political conviction, B.D. Eerdmans characterised “the indifference of those who call themselves our supporters as liberals” in 1905 as the “biggest danger with which we as champions of modernist religious life have to struggle.” Those liberals who paid lip service to the modernist movement, but never actively participated in it, were “way more dangerous to us than a fierce attack from orthodox quarters.” They strengthened confessionalists in their belief that modern theology was the cause of waning interest in religious life.<sup>64</sup> Although he began by saying that modernists themselves were to blame for the impending victory of Catholicism and orthodox Calvinism, an anonymous modernist in fact blamed political liberals for it at the end of a 1906 article in *Teekenen des Tijds* – after all, he concluded, if the latter had assisted modernists in their advancement of free religious life, Kuyper and his ultramontanist allies would never have been able to seize power.<sup>65</sup> At the fourth international conference of religious liberals, held in Boston in 1907, H.Y. Groenewegen made a similar argument. The Dutch were not, he stressed, as fond of clericalism and confessionalism as the increasing social and political influence of Roman Catholics and neo-Calvinists might suggest, but because they were “religion-minded” and distrustful of currents conflicting with this

<sup>61</sup> Saying, as Buitenwerf-van der Molen does, that there was a separate modern-theological civilising offensive related to a ‘general’ – i.e. liberal-bourgeois – one is rather incorrect. Modernists contributed to this ‘general’ civilising offensive and, *in addition*, tried to popularise their specific religious viewpoints through lectures and brochures. Cf.: Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 195-196.

<sup>62</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Politieke preeken’, *De Hervorming* 1895-12 (23 March 1895), 46.

<sup>63</sup> “*Wij hebben ruimschoots onze bekomst van dat soort liberalisme...*” Quoted from: L. Knappert, ‘Het “Schoolblad” en het godsdienstonderwijs’, *Ibid.* 1898-25 (18 June 1898), 99.

<sup>64</sup> “*Het groote kwaad waarmede wij als voorstanders van het vrijzinnig godsdienstig leven te worstelen hebben is de onverschilligheid van hen die zich als liberalen onze medestanders noemen. Zij zijn voor ons heel wat gevaarlijker dan een felle bestrijding van orthodoxe zijde.*” Quoted from: [B.D. Eerdmans in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1905-44 (4 November 1905), 347-349, there 348.

<sup>65</sup> Een vrijzinnige, ‘Aan wie de schuld, zoo Rome en Dordt spoedig weer zegevieren? Ernstig woord ter overdenking voor de “verlichte” liberale landgenooten’, *Teekenen des Tijds* VIII (1906), 67-83. The article was also issued as a separate brochure.

religion-mindedness, many of them preferred politics based on dogmatic rigidity to a liberalism that did not seem to care about religious affairs at all. Groenewegen implied that modernists, at the moment “being a hardly recognisable subsection of liberalism in general,” should not take this lying down.<sup>66</sup> H.T. de Graaf agreed. In a series of editorials in 1920, he lamented that modernists had all too long been “dragged along by sceptical liberals.” Modernists carried the can for the latter’s indifference. By disregarding religious motives as a relevant factor in politics, liberals had given confessionalists the opportunity to monopolise religion in the political arena. Now that confessionalists had managed to increase their social visibility and political influence, liberals only reckoned with Christianity in its orthodox form, overlooking modernists and treating them as a “negligible quantity.” De Graaf repeated what many modernists had argued before him and what opinion leaders such as G.J. Heering would argue after him: thinking that religion does not play any role in politics and society is a delusion.<sup>67</sup>

#### 4. Modernist Group Formation within Political Liberalism

Modernist dissatisfaction with political liberalism was not limited to the utterance of jeremiads. Those modernists who not only accused liberal leaders of being disinterested in religion, but who went one step further in their criticism by arguing that modernist principles could not be done full justice to within the existing liberal framework, felt that modernists with liberal leanings should intensify their bonds. As early as 1876, H.Ph. de Kanter hinted at the separation of modernist liberals from other political liberals if the latter continued to neglect the importance of religion for national life. Taking Samuel van Houten as the pre-eminent example of the sacrilegious liberal, and borrowing the adage ‘in isolation lies our strength’ from the founding father of anti-revolutionary politics, Guillaume Groen van Prinsterer (1801-1876), De Kanter said that modernists should in that case take the latter’s motto to heart rather than being loyal to the former.<sup>68</sup> In the build-up to the establishment of the Liberal Union in 1885, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. straightforwardly asked if modernists should stand aloof from this initiative and instead found a separate *Protestantenbondspartij* (NPB party), dedicated to the free development of religious life in politics and society while rejecting clericalism. Fearing that such a party would foster complacency and keep at a distance liberals who contributed to the cause after which the modernist movement aspired without being aware of that themselves, he gave a negative answer.<sup>69</sup> Fellow dissatisfied liberal modernists apparently agreed with Hugenholtz that their place was *within* the Liberal Union (and its conservative and progressive offshoots), as none of them made any attempt to found a party of their own.

<sup>66</sup> “...godsdienstig gezind...”; “Wij, modern-godsdienstigen, zijn een nauwelijks onderkenbare onder-afdeeling van het liberalisme in ‘t algemeen.” Quoted from: [H.Y. Groenewegen in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Buitenland’, *De Hervorming* 1907-44 (2 November 1907), 349-350, there 350.

<sup>67</sup> “...op sleeptouw genomen door sceptische liberalen...”; “...quantité négligeable...” Quoted from: H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Tegen wie?’, *Ibid.* 1920-25 (26 June 1920), 98. See also: H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Als men niet loslaat...’, *Ibid.* 1920-27 (10 July 1927), 106-107, there 106; H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Van de fusieplannen’, *Ibid.* 1920-49 (11 December 1920), 194; G.J. Heering, ‘Sociale en a-sociale religie’, *Ibid.* 1926-43 (23 October 1926), 340-341, there 340.

<sup>68</sup> “...in ons isolement ligt onze kracht.” Quoted from: [H.Ph. de Kanter in:] ‘Protestantendag’, *Ibid.* 1876-49 (7 December 1876), 2-4, there 3.

<sup>69</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Onze verhouding tot de liberale Unie’, *Ibid.* 1885-03 (17 January 1885), 11; 1885-04 (24 January 1885), 14-15, there 14.



Nonetheless, the issue came to be discussed again in 1906. Commenting on a lecture L. Knappert had given on religious and political liberalism in The Hague, an editor of the liberal *Nieuwe Courant* (*New Newspaper*) interpreted this lecture as a plea for party formation on a modernist basis. Knappert, he paraphrased, had noticed with regret that manifestations of religious belief were more and more removed from public life, and had even echoed Kuiper by urging modernists to show “that their religion is sovereign, having control over every segment of life – including political life.” Knappert might have *said* that he rejected the way in which Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants mixed faith and politics, but had actually suggested his fellow modernists to follow the example of confessionalist politics. After all, “how can the state ‘advance’ religion,” the editor asked Knappert, “without giving preferential treatment to [certain] denominations and without choosing between religious currents?”<sup>70</sup> In response, Knappert explained that a separate political party of modernist liberals was not what he envisioned, but he failed to make clear how modernist liberals should give expression to their religious views and interests, which, from a modernist perspective, were considered to be the same as the ‘public interest’, within the political domain.<sup>71</sup>

A modernist liberal *party* would never come into being.<sup>72</sup> The fear that such a party could only exist as a kind of modernist ‘ARP’ was responsible for this. However, modernists took

<sup>70</sup> “...dat hun godsdienst souverain is, elk terrein des levens beheerschend – dus ook het staatkundige.”; “...zonder kerkgenootschappen te bevoordeelen en tusschen geestelijke stroomingen te kiezen?” Quoted in: ‘De vrijzinnig-godsdienstige partij’, *De Tijd* 1906-17758 (23 January 1906), 5-6, there 6.

<sup>71</sup> [L. Knappert in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen en “liberalen”’, *De Hervorming* 1906-05 (3 February 1906), 36.

<sup>72</sup> Several sources do suggest that separate parties carrying the adjective ‘liberal Christian’ in their name, and hence explicitly based on liberal Protestant principles, took part in elections. In 1925, 1927, 1929 and 1933, a party called ‘Vrije Christelijke Partij’ (‘Free Christian Party’) took part in elections in the constituency of The Hague. According to some newspapers and the *Repertorium Kleine Politieke Partijen 1918-1967*, a database in which information is collected about all Dutch oppositional political parties founded between 1918 and 1967, this party was also known as ‘Vrijzinnige Christelijke Partij’ or ‘Vrijzinnige Christenpartij’. (The *Repertorium* wrongfully says that this party did not show any activity after 1929.) In one article, its leader J.F. van Es (1882-1951) stated to be a member of a Dutch Reformed congregation in The Hague. In the late 1920s and 1930s, Van Es organised Christmas and Easter celebrations for the poor and needy during several of which a certain N. Selier, Sr. (1859-1943) gave a sermon-like talk. At the time, Selier, Sr. was an elder in a congregation belonging to the Christian Reformed Church, a very orthodox denomination somewhat comparable to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. Taking this into account, it is very unlikely that Van Es was a Dutch Reformed *liberal* and that the adjective ‘vrijzinnige’ in his party’s supposed alternative name referred to religious liberalism. Instead of meaning ‘liberal Christian party’, the alternative name ‘Vrijzinnige Christelijke Partij’ might have meant ‘liberal democratic Christian party’, with ‘vrijzinnige’ being used in the same non-religious way as the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* used it. However, it is most probable that the sources mentioning the alternative party name have erroneously read the adjective ‘vrije’ as ‘vrijz.’, which is a commonly used Dutch abbreviation of ‘vrijzinnig’, and that the ‘Vrije Christelijke Partij’ did not have an alternative name at all. See: ‘Nederland – Vrije Christelijke Partij’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXII.99 (9 April 1925), evening paper D, 1; ‘Binnenland – Vrijz. Christelijke Partij’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCVIII.31645 (10 April 1925), morning paper, 5; ‘Tweede Kamerverkiezingen’, *Het Vaderland* (19 May 1925), evening paper A, 1; ‘Candidatenlijsten’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCVIII.31684 (20 May 1925), 18; ‘De Kamerverkiezingen’, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* XLVIII.14481 (10 June 1925), 2; ‘Binnenland – De Tweede Kamerverkiezingen’, *Het Centrum* XLII.12440 (10 June 1925), 1; ‘Uitslag der verkiezingen voor de Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal’, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* XLVIII.14501 (3 July 1925), 6; ‘Candidaatstelling voor den gemeenteraad’, *Het Vaderland* (12 April 1927), evening paper C, 3; J.F. van Es, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De Bethlehemkerk’, *Ibid.* (17 July 1928), evening paper A, 3; ‘De candidaatstelling’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* CII.33133 (22 May 1929), morning paper, 5; ‘De monsterring voor de stembus’, *Soerabaiasch Handelsblad* LXXVII.145 (29 June 1929), 1; ‘Kerstfeest voor behoeftigen’, *Het Vaderland* (28 December 1929), evening paper A, 2; ‘Kerstfeestviering van behoeftigen’, *Ibid.* (27 December 1930), evening paper B, 2; ‘Candidaatstelling voor de verkiezing van leden der Tweede Kamer’, *Ibid.* (15 March 1933), evening paper D, 1; ‘Ds. T.A. Bakker ter aarde besteld’, *Haagsche Courant*

several initiatives to make the modernist element in liberalism more visible and hence more influential. Mennonite minister and parliamentary candidate for the League of Free Liberals K. Vos, for example, launched a personal election campaign in 1918 in which he specifically targeted modernist voters. His manifesto, set forth during an electoral meeting in Amsterdam, undeniably shows this. As a free liberal, Vos explained that he was extremely wary of government interference in social life. He nonetheless contended that the state should not be unconcerned about the place of religion in society, for morality, he argued, is inextricably interwoven with piety. A spirit of “sincerity in life, good faith and justice” should therefore be “preserved.” As the confessionalist parties demonstrated, with their pleas for the death penalty, the abolishment of compulsory vaccination, the admission of Catholic processions on public roads, the recognition of Catholic church weddings and censorship on theatre plays, Roman Catholic and Protestant orthodoxy did not foster such a spirit. A blossoming of modernist religiosity in society, Vos stressed, was therefore in the interest of the state itself. Another indication of his focus on modernist voters is that Vos pleaded for the abolishment of Ascension Day as a holiday, “for half of the population does not believe in it.”<sup>73</sup> Moreover, several liberal Reformed ministers issued a circular in which they declared to support Vos’s candidature and urged their modernist *confrères* to do the same. Vos, they stated, wanted to preserve existing ecclesial privileges, such as state salaries for ministers, and hence served their interests.<sup>74</sup>

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1940-17660 (30 August 1940), 9; K.P.S.S. Vossen, *Vrij vissen in het Vondelpark. Kleine politieke partijen in Nederland 1918-1940* (Amsterdam 2003), 232.

Additionally, one 1931 newspaper article mentions that a ‘*vrijz. chr. partij*’ (‘liberal Christian party’) was supposed to have lost its only seat in the municipal council of De Bilt. This cannot be the same party as the one led by Van Es, as the latter did not participate in elections outside of the constituency of The Hague. Another 1931 article indicates that this ‘*vrijz. chr. partij*’ was a one-man list only carrying the name of a certain P.N. Hoogland (1858-1943). It is safe to conclude that Hoogland was not a religious liberal and that the articles referring to him with the abbreviation ‘*vrijz.*’ are based on typing errors. After all, he had taken part in the municipal elections in De Bilt on behalf of the Anti-Revolutionary Party in 1919, as an ‘anti-revolutionary dissident’ (that is, with a list of his own next to the official list of the ARP) in 1923, and as the sole candidate of the ‘list-Hoogland’ in 1927. In this last year, the list-Hoogland was also referred to as ‘*vrije chr.*’ (‘free Christian’). Soon afterwards, Hoogland joined the local Christian Historical Union. See: ‘Uit den omtrek’, *Amersfoortsch Dagblad “De Eemlander”* XVII.275 (21 May 1919), 3; ‘De gemeenteraadsverkiezingen’, *Het Volk* XXIV.7082 (19 May 1923), 9; ‘Gemeenteraadsverkiezingen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* C.32407 (20 May 1927), morning paper, 5; ‘Gemeenteraadsverkiezingen’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIV.138 (20 May 1927), evening paper E, 1; ‘Gemeenteraadsverkiezingen’, *Voorwaarts* XI.3333 (12 June 1931), 10; ‘Uitslag gemeenteraadsverkiezingen’, *Het Volk* XXXII.10919 (13 June 1931), 11.

In 1923, in the circle of the recently founded *Vereeniging tot verbreiding der vrije religie* (Association for the Spread of Free Religion), the initiative was taken to establish a party called ‘*Vrij-Religieuze Staatspartij*’ (‘Free Religious State Party’). Several ministers, mostly belonging to the extreme left wing of the modernist movement, among them H.G. van Wijngaarden, were involved with this association. It could more or less be seen as a continuation of the failed Free Religious Federation, referred to in chapter 5. See: ‘Kerknieuws – Vereeniging tot verbreiding der vrije religie’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXX.82 (24 March 1923), evening paper D, 2; ‘Een nieuwe staatspartij’, *Ibid.* LXXX.131 (13 May 1923), morning paper D, 1. The initiative to found the *Vrij-Religieuze Staatspartij*, intended to counteract both the ‘sectarianism’ of the confessionalist parties and the religious indifference in liberal and socialist parties, received hardly any attention in the modernist press. S.H.N. Gorter did make mention of it in *De Stroom*; he felt that its aims were too general and that it failed to make clear how it wanted to realise these aims. See: [S.H.N. Gorter], ‘In den stroom – Vrij-Religieuze Staatspartij?’, *De Stroom* II.24 (26 May 1923), 2. The initiative foundered before it was even put into effect; an announced constituent assembly was never held.

In sum, political parties *solely* consisting of liberal Protestants or *exclusively* based on liberal Protestant principles have thus indeed never existed.

<sup>73</sup> “*Het komt er op aan den geest van levensernst, goede trouw en gerechtigheid te conserveren.*”; “*...omdat de helft van het volk daaraan niet gelooft.*” Quoted in: “De Vrij-Liberalen tegenover het geestelijke leven des volks”, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCI.29114 (9 April 1918), morning paper, 7.

<sup>74</sup> W.R. Diephuis, ‘Ingezonden – Op den verkeerden weg’, *De Hervorming* 1918-24 (15 June 1918), 95-96.

A personal political initiative such as Vos's was a sensitive matter in the modernist movement: Dutch Reformed minister W.R. Diephuis (1887-1971) voiced the general feeling among modernists when he stated that voting for someone *primarily* because of shared religious ideas instead of shared political principles smacked too much of confessionalist politics.<sup>75</sup> But modernist initiatives to influence liberal politics were not restricted to attempts to get individual modernists elected in parliament. Starting in the mid-1910s, three initiatives have been made that at least implicitly intended to make modernists more heard in liberal political parties. True, two of these, the founding of the *Godsdienstig-Democratische Kring* (Religious Democratic Circle) within the Liberal Democratic League in 1914, and the creation of the *Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek* (Society for Ethical National Politics) in 1922, were not exclusively modernist affairs. Yet, their founders and leaders were modernists. The Society for Ethical National Politics was moreover not an exclusively liberal affair. It is, nonetheless, justified to deal with it here, since its sphere of action *included* liberalism and, judging by what Roessingh, one of the society's leaders, noticed in 1925, most modernists were politically still oriented towards liberalism.

The oldest of those initiatives, the Religious Democratic Circle, operated within liberal democratic circles. The driving spirit behind it was Ph.A. Kohnstamm, an educationalist with a secular Jewish background who joined the Dutch Reformed Church in 1917. Being both chairman, from 1907 until 1918, and party ideologist of the VDB, Kohnstamm was a central figure in the Liberal Democratic League. His position within the VDB can be compared to the one Banning would have within the SDAP from the 1930s onwards. The kinship with Banning went even further: Kohnstamm was also driven by the endeavour to base his party on a philosophy of life in which liberal Protestant principles were firmly embedded. As did Banning, he considered the individual personality to be at the centre of Christian ethics. The individual personality, he argued, could only be done full justice to in a political democracy, a political arena to which every adult has access, and in a social democracy, by which he meant a society in which no one was preoccupied with earning his daily bread. Government policy should be aimed at enabling the individual personality to realise its full potential. Contrary to the social ethics that had dominated liberalism thus far, Kohnstamm did not mean that people should be helped to become decent civilians, but rather that people should be given the opportunity to pursue the (modernist) ideal of becoming a 'spiritual aristocrat'. By founding the Religious Democratic Circle, Kohnstamm tried to get the VDB to "unconditionally recognise religion as the deepest manifestation of human life and the highest value in life" – not only out of dissatisfaction with the perceived spirit of religious indifference in liberal politics, but, and this is crucial, also in reaction to confessionalists' monopolisation of religion as a motive for political engagement and as an all-pervasive force in social life.<sup>76</sup>

Although the Religious Democratic Circle ceased to show activity after 1919, Kohnstamm's efforts eventually had some success. In 1920, he managed to have a sentence included in the VDB's new political programme in which "the high value of religion for national

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> "Wij erkennen den godsdienst onvoorwaardelijk als diepste levensuiting en hoogste levenswaarde." Quoted from: 'Inleiding', *De Schakel* I (1916), 1-3, there 1. See also: Ph.A. Kohnstamm, *Godsdienst en politiek. Een studie over politieke partijvorming* (Haarlem 1915); Te Velde, *Gemeenschapszin en plichtsbeseft*, 198-202; M.H. Klijnsma, *Om de democratie. De geschiedenis van de Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond, 1901-1946* (Amsterdam 2008), 348-350.

life is acknowledged.” His close ally D. van Embden (1875-1962), who had also been a religious Jew before becoming a member of the Remonstrant Brotherhood, accomplished in 1923 to have party congresses held on Sundays open with a ‘devotional’ ceremony. Moreover, with liberal Protestantism being more explicitly appreciated, the VDB secured the persistent sympathy of several modernist opinion leaders.<sup>77</sup> Kohnstamm and his supporters propagated their views in *De Schakel* (*The Link*), issued as the official journal of the Religious Democratic Circle from 1916 until 1919, and in a series of brochures called ‘*Synthese*’ (‘*Synthesis*’), started in 1914 and incorporated into the monthly political and cultural magazine *Onze Eeuw* (*Our Century*) in 1922.<sup>78</sup> As the name ‘*Synthese*’ indicates, they tried to relate Christianity and politics not, as confessionalists did, by raising an antithesis between theology-based and secular politics, but by developing a political theory “that connects a strong reform agenda with interest in and concern for the big spiritual questions preoccupying our nation.”<sup>79</sup> For them, the only dividing line in politics that really mattered was that between the willingness and unwillingness to bring about democracy in the political and social senses explained above.

After the perishing of the Religious Democratic Circle, the Society for Ethical National Politics came to shelter many who had been involved with Kohnstamm’s creation. Both Kohnstamm himself and Van Embden were among its founding members,<sup>80</sup> as well as Roessingh and De Graaf, who had written brochures as part of the *Synthese* series. Together with Heering, Roessingh and De Graaf were the moving forces behind the Society for Ethical National Politics. Being hence dominated by modernists, the society tried to enhance the “moral character of politics,” to stress the ethical character of political issues and to “exterminate many cultured individuals’ aversion to participation in political life.”<sup>81</sup> This last intention should be read against the background of the effectuation of general enfranchisement and compulsory voting at the end of the 1910s. As Van Embden explained using modernist discourse in a 1922 brochure, political life could only be put on a higher level if the spiritually most developed Dutchmen and Dutchwomen took up their moral duty to set a good example. The moral level of political parties, he argued, depended on the people who populated them. By not taking part in party politics, the spiritually most developed should consequently be held responsible for parties’ inaptitude to totally eradicate social wrongs.<sup>82</sup> In circles of intellectuals, artists and students, there was a good deal of repugnance against contemporary political life, either because parliamentary mass democracy gave political power to people who were deemed intellectually incapable of making conscious political decisions, led to dishonest practices, shifted the focus in national life from culture to politics, and thwarted anarchist ambitions, or conflicted with the ideal of direct democracy.<sup>83</sup> To enforce their complaints, some intellectuals

<sup>77</sup> “...de hooge waarde van den godsdienst voor het volksleven worde erkend.” Quoted in: Klijnsma, *Om de democratie*, 703.

<sup>78</sup> This magazine ceased to exist in 1924.

<sup>79</sup> “...die een krachtige hervormings-politiek verbindt met belangstelling voor en medeleven in de groote geestelijke vragen, die ons volk vervullen...” Quoted from: ‘Inleiding’, *De Schakel* I (1916), 1-3, there 3.

<sup>80</sup> J.Th.M. Bank, *Opkomst en ondergang van de Nederlandse Volksbeweging (NVB)* (Deventer 1978), 128.

<sup>81</sup> “...handhaving van het zedelijk karakter der politiek...”; “...uitroeiing van den bij vele ontwikkelden bestaanden weerzin tegen deelneming aan het politieke leven...” Quoted from: ‘Statuten van het Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek’, appendix to *Het Gemeenebest* I.1 (January 1923), 1-2. See also: G.J. Heering, *Wat wil het Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek?* (Leiden 1922).

<sup>82</sup> J. van Embden, *De ontwikkelden en de politiek* (Leiden 1922).

<sup>83</sup> L.M.H. Joosten, *Katholieken en fascisme in Nederland, 1920-1940* (Utrecht [1964] 1982), 164.

even tried to get vagabonds and buffoons elected with ridiculous election promises – leading to the emergence of ‘scum’ parties in Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Haarlem<sup>84</sup> – and would be among the first to embrace fascism.<sup>85</sup> Although not challenging the system of mass democracy as such – on the contrary, its founders were convinced democrats –, the Society for Ethical National Politics was also concerned about the negative side effects mass democracy could have on political culture. It therefore emphasised that politics should be *ethical*, which meant that politicians ought to abstain from populist rhetoric and underhand doings and ought to base their political actions on firm principles, and that politics should be in the *public* interest, not in the interest of one class, as was politics based on the theory of the class struggle, or Christian orthodoxy, as was the result of politics based on the theory of the antithesis. In line with this, the official magazine of the society was tellingly titled ‘*Het Gemeenebest*’ (*The Common Good*).

The Society for Ethical National Politics wanted to facilitate discussions between people with different political preferences in order to find “a shared ethical core in the manifestos of all political parties” and hence increase the willingness among representatives of those parties to collaboratively effectuate what the present day demanded.<sup>86</sup> It ultimately aimed, as De Graaf put it, at bringing about “a purer, may I be allowed to say, a more sacred sphere of political life than the one to which we got used.”<sup>87</sup> It did not want to function as a political party, but hoped that its activities would permeate existing parties with a spirit based on justice and Christianity.<sup>88</sup> These two terms were not specified and thus remained rather vague, as did all of the statements members of the society made to characterise their aim. This vagueness will have undoubtedly contributed to the limited support that the society received. *Het Gemeenebest* was last issued in 1927 and a last congress, at which the society was abolished, took place a year later.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>84</sup> In Amsterdam, the *Vrije Socialistische Groep* (Free Socialist Group), founded by several anarchist intellectuals and nicknamed ‘*Rapaillepartij*’ (‘Scum Party’), managed to have vagabond Cornelis de Gelder (1856-1931), nicknamed ‘*Hadjememaar*’, and the eccentric hawker Bertus Zuurbier (1880-1962) elected to the city council in 1921. The party promised to reduce the price of liquor and beer to only five cents and to allow fishing in the central *Vondelpark* without permit. A year later, it unsuccessfully took part in the parliamentary elections with a campaign led by Klaas Driehuis (1871-1926), who consequently sang instead of spoke. On behalf of the *Rapaillepartij*, furniture maker L.G.A. Coremans (1887-1952) conquered a seat in the city council of Rotterdam in 1923. The party ceased to exist shortly afterwards. See: Vossen, *Vrij vissen in het Vondelpark*, 144.

<sup>85</sup> C.D.J. Brandt et al. (eds.), *Onderdrukking en verzet. Nederland in oorlogstijd I* (Arnhem 1950), 103; Vossen, *Vrij vissen in het Vondelpark*, 142-144; R. te Slaa and E. Klijn, *Ontstaan en opkomst van de Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging, 1931-1935* (Amsterdam 2009), 81-84.

<sup>86</sup> “...een zedelijke kern van overeenstemming in de programmapunten van alle politieke partijen.” Quoted from: H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Het Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek’, *De Hervorming* 1922-06 (11 February 1922), 44-45, there 45.

<sup>87</sup> “...tot een zuiverder, men vergunne mij het woord, tot een heiliger sfeer van politiek leven, dan waaraan wij gewend zijn geraakt.” Quoted in: G.J. Heering, ‘Levensbericht van Prof. Dr. H.T. de Graaf’, *Handelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden en levensberichten harer afgestorven medeleden, 1930-1931 II* (Leiden 1931), 6-13, there 7.

<sup>88</sup> The Society for Ethical National Politics was based on the conviction that political life could not stay the same as it had been prior to the World War that had ended in 1918. Both the relations between political parties in the Netherlands and the relations between European nations were still characterised by mutual mistrust and competition. As Heering wrote in the first brochure issued by the Society for Ethical National Politics, this was so because the principles of justice and Christianity were not applied in national and international political life. The society wanted to change this. See: Heering, *Wat wil het Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek?*, 5-6.

<sup>89</sup> ‘Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek’, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* LXXV.190 (10 July 1928), morning paper C, 1. Looking back upon the Society for Ethical National Politics in 1932, Heering thought that the society had gone down because its scope of aims had been too ambitious. See: Exalto, “Dit Koninkrijk tartende oorlogs-bedrijf”, 27.

Although their rejection of the antithesis and the class struggle would have made an orientation towards liberalism rather obvious, the members of the society were just as disappointed in liberal political parties as in confessionalist and socialist ones.<sup>90</sup> As De Graaf had already put forward in 1919 by paraphrasing an anonymous acquaintance, whose opinion he believed to be shared by many modernists, liberal political parties still thought that the separation of church and state required religion to be absent in political life, and lacked the idealistic belief in a more humane society. The efforts Kohnstamm was making at the time to integrate liberal Protestant principles into the politics of the VDB could not convince De Graaf's acquaintance to change his opinion on political liberalism. Because of such sentiments, which De Graaf and his sympathisers did not conceal, combined with pleas for (unilateral) disarmament and more autonomy for the Dutch East Indies,<sup>91</sup> the Society for Ethical National Politics gave the impression of leaning towards the far left of the political spectrum.<sup>92</sup> Remonstrant E.C. van Dorp (1872-1945), the first female economist in the Netherlands and at the time the only parliamentarian of the conservative *Liberale Partij* (Liberal Party), accused the society of not sticking to its own rule to abstain from party politics. By rejecting the *Vlootwet*, intended to reinforce the Dutch marine, and supporting the *Arbeidsgeschillenwet*, which introduced the principle of arbitration in economic life and hence conflicted with the Liberal Party's economic principle of *laissez-faire*, the society, Van Dorp implied, sided with socialist parties.<sup>93</sup> She mentioned it in relation to what she perceived as a Marxist turn in Dutch modernism.<sup>94</sup>

Van Dorp belonged to a group of modernists with mostly conservative-liberal political ideas who felt that liberals were shouted down by socialists and antimilitarists in both the liberal Protestant press and in liberal Protestant congregations. F.C.M. Boenders, the unofficial leader of this group, did not blame his socialist and antimilitarist co-religionists for championing their political creed. Rather, he regretted that those who did not believe in "the dogma of maximised state interventionism" remained silent. Because socialist modernists manifested themselves so loudly, conservative political liberals such as Boenders had the impression of being looked down upon in modernist circles. In liberal parties, they did not feel completely at home either, focused as these parties were on material issues. Boenders therefore urged all modernists who felt the same as he did to join forces – not with the intention of forming a more conservative equivalent to the Society for Ethical National Politics, but to increase their visibility in both the modernist movement and liberal parties.<sup>95</sup> In early 1925, the editor of *De Hervorming*, in which

<sup>90</sup> E.g.: A.A. van Rhijn, *Christendom en politiek* (Leiden 1924), 25-26.

<sup>91</sup> *Het vraagstuk van nationale ontwapening. Rapport van de gemeente commissie ter bestudeering van het ontwapeningsvraagstuk uit het Genootschap voor Zedelijke Volkspolitiek en de Vereeniging voor Volkenbond en Vrede* (Leiden 1924); C. van Vollenhoven, *Indië gisteren en heden* (Leiden 1922).

<sup>92</sup> Until well into the twentieth century, the term 'left' in a political context did not, as today, refer to parties that favour progressive socio-economical and ethical politics, but to *all* non-confessionalist parties – liberal, socialist and communist ones alike. Here, the term *far* left refers to all non-confessionalist parties *excluding* liberal ones. In present-day Dutch politics, 'right' includes the biggest liberal party, the *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy or VVD).

<sup>93</sup> E.C. van Dorp, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – De kerk en de sociale vraagstukken', *De Hervorming* 1924-09 (1 March 1924), 67-70, there 70.

<sup>94</sup> E.C. van Dorp, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – De kerk en de sociale vraagstukken', *Ibid.* 1924-03 (19 January 1924), 19-21, there 21.

<sup>95</sup> "...het dogma van zooveel mogelijk staatsbemoeienis..." Quoted from: F.C.M. Boenders, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Vereeniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen', *Ibid.* 1924-52 (27 December 1924), 413-414, there 413. See also: F.C.M. Boenders, 'Vereeniging van godsdienstige vrijzinnigen', *Ibid.* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 52;

Boenders had recently made his call, received many letters of approval and disapproval with the idea of establishing an association of conservative liberal modernists. Future fascist G.H. van Senden, for example, said Boenders's feeling of uneasiness with the perceived dominance of socialist opinions in the modernist press was justified, but blamed him for his lack of social reform-mindedness. Socialist Joh.E. Post (1880-1945) cynically characterised conservative-liberal modernists as "Christians stepping on the brake," who cherished the ideal of solidarity and social harmony while shrinking back from attempts to realise them, but welcomed Boenders's initiative as a means to bring out more clearly which modernists championed and which modernists rejected structural social reform.<sup>96</sup>

Liberal heavyweight J. de Louter, on the other hand, applauded Boenders for venting what he himself had already felt for years. The rise of right-wing modernism and the growing response socialism was finding in modernist circles, two processes which he considered to be related, had deteriorated the modernist movement rationally and ethically. Socialist modernists made the same mistake as confessionals by applying Christianity's ethical appeal to the individual to society as a whole. De Louter therefore fully supported Boenders's call, in order to put the modernist movement back on the right – liberal – track.<sup>97</sup> Mennonite minister P. Feenstra, Jr., member of the liberal Dutch Reformed congregation in Sneek F.H. Pyttersen (1869-1952) and member of the NPB branch in Amersfoort L. van Wijngaarden (1872-1952) stressed that modernist liberals should first and foremost try to exert more influence *within* existing liberal parties.<sup>98</sup> De Louter, however, explained that a separate organisation of modernist liberals was needed to prevent the organised modernist movement, to which the NPB gave shape, from disintegrating along the lines of political differences. Though not using the word 'socialism' as such, he implied that socialist-minded modernists made improper use of the NPB to propagate their political views and tried to make the modernist movement subservient to their political cause. This led to tensions with modernists who did not share these political views. The NPB, De Louter emphasised, was an association with a *religious* task and intended to bring together people who shared the religious ideal of free piety. Socialist modernists should therefore only put forward their *political* views in channels created with a political objective, such as the Religious Socialist League and *De Blijde Wereld*. Of course, De Louter admitted, the same applied to liberal modernists, including himself. If they wanted to express their political views, they, too, should do so in a separate organisation.<sup>99</sup> The meeting during which De Louter uttered these words (and which was supposed to lead to the establishment of a group of modernist liberals), held directly after the annual meeting of modern theologians on 22 April 1925, did not have the result De Louter and Boenders had hoped for. The number of attendants was low, whereas

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F.C.M. Boenders, 'Vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen', *Ibid.* 1925-15 (11 April 1925), 114; Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 485-489.

<sup>96</sup> "...*Christenen met de Rem...*" Quoted from: J.E. Post, 'Het voorstel-Boenders', *De Hervorming* 1925-02 (10 January 1925), 13.

<sup>97</sup> J. de Louter, 'Antwoord aan mr. F.C.M. Boenders', *Ibid.* 1925-02 (10 January 1925), 12.

<sup>98</sup> P. Feenstra, Jr., 'Ingezonden', *Ibid.* 1925-03 (17 January 1925), 21; [F.H. Pyttersen and L. van Wijngaarden in:] 'Ingezonden – De oproep van ds.mr. Boenders', *Ibid.* 1925-03 (17 January 1925), 21-22.

<sup>99</sup> J. de Louter, 'Toespraak tot een "groep van vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen"', *Ibid.* 1925-18 (1 May 1925), 141-142; 1925-19 (8 May 1925), 147-148.

the dissension among modernist liberals on the questions of whether a separate organisation was needed and what such an association should do, was too big to come to concrete action.<sup>100</sup>

Yet, in late 1930, some liberal modernists issued a circular in which they called on their politically like-minded co-religionists to finally close ranks.<sup>101</sup> B.D. Eerdmans was the driving force behind this new attempt. In 1925, he had doubted whether liberal modernists needed a separate organisation to uphold their religion-based political beliefs, probably because he felt that his *Vrijheidsbond* already offered liberal modernists the opportunity to do so.<sup>102</sup> Afterwards, however, he had come to see that his scepticism was wrong. Without coordinated action, it had proved to be impossible for political liberals to counterbalance the influence of the well-organised socialist current within the modernist movement. After the formation of a provisional committee, chaired by Eerdmans, in March 1931, the *Vereeniging van Vrijzinnig-Godsdienstige Liberalen* (Association of Modernist Liberals) was formally established on 6 June 1931.<sup>103</sup> Its mouthpiece was the monthly opinion magazine *Onze Wachter* (*Our Guard*), issued between 27 January 1933 and 30 April 1940, after which the association fell silent for good. Although its editors repeatedly emphasised that it was not their endeavour to raise liberal voices against, but rather *next* to socialist ones,<sup>104</sup> *Onze Wachter* was in fact filled with attacks against the claims made by socialist modernists. For example, editor-in-chief and army officer M.P. Kokje (1894-1986), contradicted modernists who believed in the blessings of socialism by rhetorically asking them if the only country in which “the spirit of socialism is at least partially concretised,” Soviet Russia, was really as blissful as they hoped a socialist state would be.<sup>105</sup> F.C.M. Boenders, who joined the editorial board in January 1935, argued that the SDAP, the favourite of many modernist opinion leaders, was either a “radical bourgeois party,” committed to democratic principles, or a party pursuing the materialisation of “the socialist Idea,” which was incompatible with democracy. He feared that the SDAP pretended to be the former, but secretly still pursued a “red dictatorship.”<sup>106</sup> Moreover, he blew up at socialists’, particularly red ministers’, insistence on being right all the time.<sup>107</sup>

Although their conservative liberal political views automatically drove them into the arms of the *Vrijheidsbond*, and although they did not hide their sympathies for this party, contributors to *Onze Wachter* were not entirely uncritical of liberal politics.<sup>108</sup> Interpreting the electoral defeat

<sup>100</sup> F.C.M. Boenders, ‘De groepeerings van vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen’, *Ibid.* 1925-19 (8 May 1925), 149-150.

<sup>101</sup> Referred to in e.g.: ‘Godsdienstige liberalen’, *Leeuwarder Nieuwsblad* 1930-6734 (28 November 1930), 9.

<sup>102</sup> This had also been the opinion of another modernist member of the *Vrijheidsbond*, Dutch Reformed minister G. Hulsman. See: [B.D. Eerdmans and G. Hulsman in: F.C.M. Boenders], ‘De groepeerings van vrijzinnig-godsdienstige liberalen’, *De Hervorming* 1925-19 (8 May 1925), 149-150, there 149.

<sup>103</sup> An overview of the history of this association is given in: Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 489-506.

<sup>104</sup> M.P. Kokje, ‘Ter inleiding en motiveering’, *Onze Wachter* I.1 (27 January 1933), 1-2; F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Vrijzinnig-godsdienstig liberaal of anti-socialist?’, *Ibid.* V.7 (28 July 1937), 4; [M.P. Kokje and F.C.M. Boenders], ‘Bij het 5-jarig bestaan van “Onze Wachter”’, *Ibid.* VI.1 (31 January 1938), 1; M.P. Kokje, ‘Oorsprong en doel onzer vereniging en van ons blad’, *Ibid.* VII.3 (31 March 1939), 2.

<sup>105</sup> “...waar iets in den geest van het socialisme is verwerkelijkt.” Quoted from: M.P. Kokje, ‘Ordening en sociaal gevoel’, *Ibid.* V.8 (23 September 1937), 2-3, there 3.

<sup>106</sup> “...burgerlijk radicale partij...”; “...de socialistische gedachte...”; “...roode dictatuur...” Quoted from: F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Samenwerking met sociaal-democratie’, *Ibid.* IV.7 (31 July 1936), 3.

<sup>107</sup> F.C.M. Boenders, ‘Socialistische orthodoxie’, *Ibid.* VI.6 (30 June 1938), 2.

<sup>108</sup> Outsiders apparently got the impression that the Association of Religious Liberals intended to make propaganda for the *Vrijheidsbond*, based on the number of editorials in which every official tie between the association and the *Vrijheidsbond* was explicitly denied: [M.P. Kokje], ‘Nadere toelichting’, *Ibid.* I.2 (24 February 1933), 1; ‘Verklaring omtrent onze verhouding tot de politieke partijen’, *Ibid.* I.6 (23 June 1933), 6; M.P. Kokje, ‘Onze verhouding tot



that the *Vrijheidsbond* had suffered in 1937, Boenders explained that liberal parties lacked appeal because their representatives “usually hide their religious and social commitment.” An increased activity of modernist liberals was needed to get rid of this spirit of religious timidity.<sup>109</sup> H.D. Louwes (1893-1960), at the time parliamentarian on behalf of the *Vrijheidsbond*, equally urged his fellow modernists to exert more influence on liberal parties. Only then could political liberalism “make up for its grave error, committed around 1900, of professing rationalism like a dogma.” Liberal political parties needed liberal Protestantism to reinforce their position in political life, because the free development of religious life that liberal Protestantism tried to bring about “also safeguards [*orthodox* Protestants’] right and opportunity to be spiritually absolutely autonomous and to be treated with respect.” Louwes thus believed that an integration of liberal Protestant principles with liberal political theory would turn liberal parties into a true alternative to confessionalist ones. As liberal Protestantism and political liberalism were both based on “the liberal world view,” the latter was, in turn, the obvious instrument for liberal Protestants to permeate political life with their *religious* principles.<sup>110</sup>

In 1931, in the speech he held at the inaugural meeting of the Association of Modernist Liberals, Eerdmans reminded his sympathisers that they not only had to counteract politics theoretically – as in the case of socialism – or practically – as in the case of liberal parties – based on a materialistic outlook on life, but also clericalist politics.<sup>111</sup> A year later, J.A. Eigeman (1876-1958), one of Eerdmans’s fellow modernist members of the *Vrijheidsbond*, stressed that no liberal could be satisfied with the “state clericalism,” the dominance of confessionalists on the legislative and executive political levels, that had managed to develop parallel to ecclesial clericalism. But, he added, it had been liberals’ own fault that such a ‘state clericalism’ could have come into being and could have gained preponderance in the first place. Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants had risen in revolt against liberals’ lack of concern for religious life.<sup>112</sup> Sharing Eigeman’s vision, Louwes pointed in a 1934 article to one of the most disturbing results of this revolt: the emergence of denominational schools. At the expense of national unity and hence national vigour, liberals had helped to relieve public education of its task to foster ‘Christian values’ and had hence made public schools abhorrent to many Dutchmen and Dutchwomen.<sup>113</sup>

## 5. Dissatisfaction with ‘Neutrality’ (I): Public Education

Louwes addressed an issue that had set modernist tongues wagging already since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Although the ideal of the truly national public school, in which children from different backgrounds harmoniously sat together, continued to be cherished in modernist circles, the volume and number of modernist voices expressing disappointment with

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de politieke partijen’, *Ibid.* IV.7 (31 July 1936), 3; M.P. Kokje, ‘Het verval der liberale partij’, *Ibid.* V.6 (30 June 1937), 2-3, there 2; M.P. Kokje, ‘Oorsprong en doel onzer vereeniging en van ons blad’, *Ibid.* VII.3 (31 March 1939), 2.

<sup>109</sup> “*De liberalen verbergen veelal religieuze en sociale bewogenheid.*” Quoted from: F.C.M. Boenders, ‘De nederlaag der liberalen’, *Ibid.* V.6 (30 June 1937), 3.

<sup>110</sup> “*...de liberale levenshouding...*” Quoted from: H.D. Louwes, ‘De vrijzinnige christenen en hun invloed op de politiek’, *Ibid.* V.11 (31 December 1937), 2.

<sup>111</sup> Van Driel, *Dienaar van twee heren*, 491.

<sup>112</sup> ‘Vereeniging van Vrijzinnig-Godsdiensstige Liberalen’, *Het Vaderland* (27 September 1932), evening paper B, 2. See also: P.G.C. van Schie, *Vrijheidsstreven in verdrukking. Liberale partijpolitiek in Nederland 1901-1940* (Amsterdam 2005), 321-322.

<sup>113</sup> H.D. Louwes, ‘Wij vrijz.-godsd. liberalen tegenover enkele actueele vraagstukken op politiek en cultureel gebied’, *Onze Wachter* II.7 (8 August 1934), 3.

public education increased every decade. In the modernist movement, it was perceived with sadness that the ‘neutral’ base of public schools, which theoretically meant that no religious feelings should be offended by public education, more and more came to be interpreted as a total absence of religion.<sup>114</sup> From 1857 onwards, when a new law emphasised that it was out of the question that public schools would ever favour one religious creed over others, most orthodox Protestants had demanded that public schools should no longer be obliged, as they were since 1806, to foster ‘all civil and Christian virtues’.<sup>115</sup> After 1868, when the Dutch bishops, following the 1864 papal encyclical *Quanta Cura*, rejected state involvement in education, Roman Catholics had begun to make the same demand.<sup>116</sup> Both groups believed, not unfoundedly, that the unspecified formulation to foster ‘all civil and Christian virtues’ was meant to instil children with the ‘Christianity above religious differences’ in which they saw no good. Moreover, it deceived parents who wished to have their children educated in full accordance with the dogmas of their faith.<sup>117</sup> In the eyes of some modernists, liberal politicians’ religious indifference caused ‘the fostering of Christian virtues’ to indeed become a hollow phrase.

While accusing liberal politicians of negatively interpreting the ‘respect for every religious conviction’ by which public schools were bound – that is, as an obligation for teachers to act as if religious life was non-existent –, modernists contended that the ‘neutrality’ of public education was a positive principle. Religious feelings should not be silenced, but should rather have the opportunity to be freely expressed and should even be bred. Modernists wanted their children to receive education permeated with a religious spirit and felt that the law was on their side: in spite of confessionalist efforts to change this, public schools continued to be obliged to foster Christian values.<sup>118</sup> Modernists did not enter into details concerning this religious spirit, but of course, as they perfectly knew themselves, such a spirit could only be a modernist one – after all, liberal Protestantism did not prescribe people what to believe and was, at least in the eyes of

<sup>114</sup> E.g.: Silvanus, ‘Een gewichtig vraagstuk – ook voor de kerk?’, *De Hervorming* 1876-30 (27 July 1876), 1-2; [M.E. van der Meulen in: H.A. van der Meulen], ‘De jaarvergadering der Evangelische Maatschappij’, *Ibid.* 1883-39 (29 September 1883), 154-155, there 154; X., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1887-35 (27 August 1887), 139; L. Knappert, ‘Het “Schoolblad” en het godsdienstonderwijs’, *Ibid.* 1898-25 (18 June 1898), 99; V.D., ‘Ingezonden stukken – De godsdienst en de openbare school’, *Ibid.* 1901-09 (2 March 1901), 70; Batavus, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Blijft er voor ons wel iets anders over dan het oprichten van eigen scholen?’, *Ibid.* 1909-16 (17 April 1909), 126-127; H. Bakels, ‘Ingezonden – Aan ds. Nijdam’, *Ibid.* 1915-38 (18 September 1915), 337-338.

<sup>115</sup> W.G.F. van Vliet, *Groen van Prinsterers historische benadering van de politiek* (Hilversum 2008), 226-234.

<sup>116</sup> H.Th. Ambagtsheer, *Jhr. mr. Jeronimo de Bosch Kemper. Behoudend maatschappijhervormer* (Amsterdam 1959), 77; P.J. Oud (J. Bosmans ed.), *Staatkundige vormgeving in Nederland I. 1840-1940* (Assen [1946] 1997), 95.

<sup>117</sup> For a detailed account of the ‘school struggle’ from a neo-Calvinist perspective, see: P.A. Diepenhorst, *Onze strijd in de Staten-Generaal I. De schoolstrijd* (Amsterdam 1927); D. Langedijk, *De schoolstrijd* (’s-Gravenhage 1935). For an overview from a Roman Catholic perspective, see: J. Aarts, *Schoolrecht, schoolstrijd, schoolwet in Nederland I and II* (Tilburg 1931-1932).

<sup>118</sup> E.g.: [I. Hooykaas in:] ‘Protestantendag’, *De Hervorming* 1876-49 (7 December 1876), 2-4, there 3; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Het nieuwe ministerie’, *Ibid.* 1877-46 (17 November 1877), 1; [M.E. van der Meulen in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Neutraal onderwijs’, *Ibid.* 1882-02 (14 January 1882), 7; [G.C. Steynis in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Winschoten’, *Ibid.* 1883-06 (10 February 1883), 22; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – Neutraliteit’, *Ibid.* 1884-15 (12 April 1884), 61; J. Herderscheê, ‘“Neutrale” geschiedenis’, *Ibid.* 1889-49 (7 December 1889), 195; J.W., ‘Neutraal onderwijs’, *Ibid.* 1890-25 (21 June 1890), 98; B.W. Colenbrander, *De volksschool en de godsdienst* (Hoorn 1899); M.v.B., ‘De godsdienst en de lagere school’, *De Hervorming* 1901-11 (16 March 1901), 82-83, there 82; K. Vos, *De openbare school* (Leiden 1905), 15-16; H. Hinse, ‘Vrijzinnig christelijke scholen’, *De Hervorming* 1909-26 (26 June 1909), 207-208, there 207; J. Bruining, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – De openbare school’, *Ibid.* 1922-03 (21 January 1922), 19-20, there 19; K. Geertsma, ‘Neutraliteitsproblemen bij ons onderwijs’, *De Smidse* VII.1 (January 1932), 13-27, there 24-27.

modernists themselves, tolerant towards orthodox conceptions of God. That Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants would never content themselves with such a spirit was not taken into consideration: these groups had the constitutional right to found schools of their own. Modernists regretted that the ideal of one school for all the nation's children became ever more unrealisable, but did not challenge the freedom of education as such. However, the freedom to found denominational schools did not mean that the champions of such schools had the right to demand that public education should be non-religious altogether. To modernists' dismay, liberal politicians did not make a firm stand against this claim.<sup>119</sup>

Because of the perceived non-religious character of public education, the complaint that public schools one-sidedly focused on the acquisition of knowledge could be heard in modernist circles. As explained in chapter 6, modernists attached great value to intellectual development, confident as they were that no truly *reasonable* individual would in due course stick to orthodox conceptions of God, yet felt that man's destiny to develop his *personality* to the full also required character building and spiritual growth. Some modernists therefore exclaimed that public schools grossly neglected the development of children's personality.<sup>120</sup> And how, did they ask, would it ever be possible for a public school to help children in developing their individuality, their moral sense and their sense of duty to devote their best efforts to the well-being of society, if its teaching staff were irreligious or at least not explicitly demonstrated to care about religious life? Because in modernist ethics, spiritual growth was considered to depend in large part on personal contact with spiritually higher developed individuals, teachers ought to be 'spiritual aristocrats'. However, many of them were not or not allowed to be, as they were more or less obliged to be silent about anything related to religion at all.<sup>121</sup> As a result, many public schools were not permeated with a religious spirit. They did offer opportunities for religious instruction, but only hidden away in weekly one-hour classes, isolated from the rest of the curriculum. Sunday schools, the founding of which modernists had copied from orthodox, could not overcome this lack of religious inspiration in public schools: ideally, they merely had to further and conceptually deepen the religious spirit with which public schools were supposed to instil children. Moreover, Sunday

<sup>119</sup> P. Bruining, however, said modernists should not only blame liberal politicians for the lack of concern for religion in public education, but themselves as well; they should have exerted more pressure. See: P. Bruining, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1901-37 (14 September 1901), 294.

<sup>120</sup> E.g.: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Zegt het voort!', *Ibid.* 1876-26 (29 June 1876), 1-2; [H. Douma in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Afd. Nieuwveen', *Ibid.* 1892-01 (2 January 1892), 2; B. Tideman Jz., 'Een levensteeken uit ons middelb. onderwijs', *Ibid.* 1895-37 (14 September 1895), 146; Censor [A. Carlier] and H. de Lang, 'De schoolkwestie', *Ibid.* 1901-10 (9 March 1901), 75-76; B.B., 'Leestafel – "Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente"', *Ibid.* 1902-21 (24 May 1902), 165; P.B. Westerdijk, 'Overlading', *Ibid.* 1903-04 (24 January 1903), 26-27; J.J. Bleeker, 'De tijden veranderen en met hen ook de mensen', *Ibid.* 1910-03 (15 January 1910), 18-19; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Klein maar veelbelovend', *Ibid.* 1915-02 (9 January 1915), 15; H.T. de Graaf, 'Hoofdartikel – De openbare school', *Ibid.* 1922-01 (7 January 1922), 1-3.

<sup>121</sup> E.g.: [W.C. van Manen in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], "'Voor school en godsdienst'", *Ibid.* 1877-19 (12 May 1877), 1-2; 'Godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1880-38 (18 September 1880), 149-151, there 150; [G.C. Steynis in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Winschoten', *Ibid.* 1883-06 (10 February 1883), 22; E. Snellen, 'Het wetsontwerp met zijn leelijke gebreken, maar zijn echt liberaal beginsel', *Ibid.* 1889-45 (9 November 1889), 180; Censor [A. Carlier in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Uit den schoolstrijd', *Ibid.* 1901-35 (31 August 1901), 275-276; P.B. Westerdijk, 'Overlading', *Ibid.* 1903-04 (24 January 1903), 26-27; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De samenkomsten te Groningen', *Ibid.* 1906-44 (3 November 1906), 348-349, there 348; H. Vrendenberg Cz., 'Twee stemmen over de onderwijsvraag', *Ibid.* 1916-41 (7 October 1916), 346-347; D. Drijver, 'Binnenland – Godsdienstige neutraliteit op de lagere school', *Ibid.* 1930-01 (4 January 1930), 2-3.

schools did not reach as many children as public schools.<sup>122</sup> The remarkable growth in the number of articles in the early twentieth-century modernist press about new methods of teaching – methods in which teachers inspired admiration because of their highly developed personality, and stimulated their pupils to develop their spiritual life – should be seen against this background.<sup>123</sup> Some modernists believed that these new methods of teaching might offer an alternative to the spiritually poverty-stricken public education.

Other modernists felt that a more drastic step was needed. Would it not be best, they suggested, to follow Roman Catholics' and orthodox Protestants' example to found denominational schools of their own? As early as 1887, an anonymous teacher working at a public school urged the NPB to found schools based on modernist principles. Modernists, he argued, should face the fact that the ideal of an undivided, truly national education system had evaporated. Moreover, 'respecting every religious conviction' meant in practice that a public school teacher had to obscure his inner life and hence an important element of his personality. As a result, a public school teacher was unable to inspire his pupils and only fostered indifference. While Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants, by establishing denominational schools, were able to instil new generations with their religious principles and to breed the kind of characters they wanted, a fatal attachment to the illusion of 'neutral' public education made it impossible for modernists to do the same.<sup>124</sup> This plea created a stir in *De Hervorming*. H. de Lang admitted that the current interpretation of 'neutrality' was unacceptable, but felt that the public school was an ideal too precious to give up. He feared that NPB-founded denominational schools would not contribute to a free development of religious life, but would drum specific modernist *conceptions* of God into children. Such schools would create little theologians, filled with the sectarian intolerance that modernists condemned in confessionalsists.<sup>125</sup> Another (anonymous) letter writer protested against the allegation that public school teachers had to abstain from

<sup>122</sup> E.g.: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., 'Zegt het voort!', *Ibid.* 1876-26 (29 June 1876), 1-2; [J.H. Hooyer in:] 'Vergadering van moderne theologen op 30 April en 1 Mei', *Ibid.* 1878-19 (11 May 1878), 1-2, there 2; J.H. Maronier, 'Scholen voor godsdienstonderwijs', *Ibid.* 1879-34 (23 August 1879), 134; J. Rinner, 'Verheffing van het godsdienstonderwijs', *Ibid.* 1880-24 (12 June 1880), 94; J. Rinner, 'Iets over zondagsscholen', *Ibid.* 1881-36 (16 September 1881), 146; J.H. Maronier, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Tweede algemeene vergadering van dames, verbonden aan zondagscholen van vrijzinnige richting', *Ibid.* 1882-22 (3 June 1882), 86; L. Knappert, 'Catechisatie-uren', *Ibid.* 1898-07 (12 February 1898), 25; P. Bruining, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1899-12 (25 March 1899), 47; P. Bruining, 'Het godsdienstonderwijs en onze openbare scholen', *Ibid.* 1900-21 (26 May 1900), 155-156; E.d.H., 'Kerkelijk leven – Algem. synode der Ned. Herv. Kerk', *Ibid.* 1918-32 (10 August 1918), 127-128; C. van der Pol, 'De openbare school een onbestaanbaar compromis', *Ibid.* 1921-48 (3 December 1921), 377-379; H.U. Meyboom, *Ons godsdienstonderwijs* (Groningen 1877). In 1898 and 1919, modernist P. Bruining made a petition to the queen in which he requested her to urge the government to improve the position of religious education in public schools. See: [P. Bruining in:] J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Een adres aan Hare Majesteit de koningin-regentes', *De Hervorming* 1898-12 (19 March 1898), 46; 'Verscheidenheden en mededeelingen – Een adres aan de koningin', *Ibid.* 1919-18 (3 May 1919), 73.

<sup>123</sup> E.g.: J.J. Meyer, 'Jan Ligthart's "Over opvoeding"', *Ibid.* 1908-04 (25 January 1908), 25-27; G.J. Heering, 'De godsdienst van Jan Ligthart', *Ibid.* 1916-13 (25 March 1916), 102-103; G.A. Hoevers, G.A., 'Leestafel – "Opvoeder en kind"', *Ibid.* 1916-30 (22 July 1916), 255-256; K.H.E. de Jong, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Dr. R. Steiner', *Ibid.* 1920-01 (10 January 1920), 1-2; R. Joosten-Chotzen, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Over Montessori-opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1920-36 (11 September 1920), 142-143; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Karakter der anthroposophie', *Ibid.* 1922-16 (22 April 1922), 122-124; H.T. de Graaf, 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Montessori's godsdienstige opvoeding', *Ibid.* 1924-19 (10 May 1924), 146-147. While Montessori and Steiner education received some severe criticism in the modernist press, Ligthart's educational ideas were applauded without exception. Ligthart gave at least once a public lecture in an NPB branch, in Moordrecht in March 1913. See: [J. Ligthart in:] 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Afdeeling Moordrecht', *Ibid.* 1913-12 (22 March 1913), 89-90.

<sup>124</sup> X., 'Neutraliteit', *Ibid.* 1887-31 (30 July 1887), 121-122.

<sup>125</sup> H. de Lang, 'Binnenland – Moderne sektescholen', *Ibid.* 1887-32 (6 August 1887), 126-127.

making any reference to their own principles of life. From personal experience, he claimed that it was indeed possible to pass a Christianity above religious differences on to children without giving offence to anyone.<sup>126</sup> Van Loenen Martinet stated to have received many more reactions, all of which denounced the idea to found modernist schools.<sup>127</sup>

However, as the perceived indifference of liberal politicians towards upholding the fostering of Christian values in public education proved to be persistent, the number of Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant schools continued to increase, and the rise of malcontentism and right-wing modernism challenged existing modernist beliefs and practices, the idea came to be discussed again in the 1900s. This time, it met with more sympathy, particularly, though not exclusively, among right-wing modernists. The reason for this is that these modernists had a more exclusive interpretation of what 'Christianity' was, and were more Bible-oriented than old-school modernists. Some of them felt that this should have consequences for education. In early 1901, a certain 'V.D.' called upon his fellow modernists to follow the example of orthodox Protestants. Just as the anonymous article writer had written fourteen years before him, he argued that it was only possible not to hurt any religious feelings if a teacher did not make any reference to religion at all. But no modernist could truly be satisfied with that.<sup>128</sup> Someone who signed as 'M.v.B.' echoed De Lang, by responding that modernist schools would only advance sectarianism.<sup>129</sup> Two anonymous teachers gave another reason why modernists should not turn away from public schools: it would be an extra argument with which confessionalists could stir people up against public education.<sup>130</sup> Yet, although the majority of modernists shared those concerns, there was a general feeling among them that the fostering of Christian values should no longer remain a dead letter.<sup>131</sup> In the 1901 article referred to above, M.v.B. said that aspiring teachers did not have time to be closely involved in religious life because their curriculum was overloaded. As a result, they simply did not know how to foster Christian values.<sup>132</sup> To do something about this, the modernist-minded *Haagsch Genootschap ter verdediging van de christelijke godsdienst* (Society for the Defence of the Christian Religion in The Hague) established a college of education in 1910. Contrary to other colleges, this one paid specific attention to the religious development of its students in order to prepare them for permeating the public schools in which they would come to work with a religious spirit. The founding of separate modernist schools would then no longer be necessary.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> E., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1887-32 (6 August 1887), 127-128.

<sup>127</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Ingezonden stukken – Protesten', *Ibid.* 1887-33 (13 August 1887), 131-132, there 131.

<sup>128</sup> V.D., 'Ingezonden stukken – De godsdienst en de openbare school', *Ibid.* 1901-09 (2 March 1901), 70.

<sup>129</sup> M.v.B., 'De godsdienst en de lagere school', *Ibid.* 1901-11 (16 March 1901), 82-83, there 82. The article writer in question was probably the then treasurer of the national NPB Maria Catharina Berdenis van Berlekom (1860-1922), who also was an educationalist and who often signed as 'Marie van Berlekom'.

<sup>130</sup> C.S. and H.d.S., 'Berichten, enz. – Van kerk en school ten platten lande', *Ibid.* 1901-48 (7 December 1901), 379-380, there 379.

<sup>131</sup> Minister A. Rutgers van der Loeff (1865-1927) belonged to the minority that did advocate the founding of modernist schools, as he made clear in: A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'Kroniek', *Teekenen des Tijds* VIII (1906), 454-481, there 467-477. The same went for the author of a two-piece article in *De Hervorming*, who signed as 'Batavus'. See: Batavus, 'Ingezonden stukken – Blijft er voor ons wel iets anders over dan het oprichten van eigen scholen?', *De Hervorming* 1909-16 (17 April 1909), 126-127; 1909-17 (24 April 1909), 134-135. Neither Rutgers van der Loeff nor 'Batavus' put forward any new arguments.

<sup>132</sup> M.v.B., 'De godsdienst en de lagere school', *Ibid.* 1901-11 (16 March 1901), 82-83, there 82.

<sup>133</sup> At the 1906 meeting of modern theologians, the founding of modernist schools was discussed, but generally rejected. Instead, the outcome of the discussion was that more should be done to combat irreligiousness at public schools. At the

Instead of challenging the current interpretation of ‘neutrality’, a minority argued that this term indeed required the absence of religious expressions and that modernists who thought differently deluded themselves. In their eyes, attempts to permeate public education with a religious (modernist) spirit would never succeed, as they conflicted with the law. This was what Dutch Reformed minister J.N. Pattist (1876-1946) emphasised in a 1910 brochure. Using typically modernist discourse, he contended that cognitive, religious and ethical development forms an inextricable triad. ‘Neutral’ schools were compelled to only concern themselves with the first component of this triad and were hence unfit for giving children a modernist upbringing. If modernist parents really considered their spiritual life to be a treasure that they wanted to share with their children, they should build schools that made this possible.<sup>134</sup>

Right-wing modernist J.J. Bleeker agreed with Pattist: whether modernists liked it or not, ‘neutral’ had come to mean ‘irreligious’. He regretted that the earliest modernists, prejudiced as they had been against everything smacking of confessionalism, had not supported Groen van Prinsterer in his plea for ‘*openbare gezindtescholen*’ (‘public denominational schools’). The rationale behind this plea was that a public school did not have to be acceptable to all, but, depending on its location, should have a religious basis in accordance with the denominational composition of the local population. This meant that public schools should have a Roman Catholic character in rural North Brabant, Limburg and eastern Overijssel, and a Protestant orientation in the countryside elsewhere in the Netherlands. In municipalities with a religiously mixed population, the government should establish separate Catholic, Protestant and Jewish schools.<sup>135</sup> Instead, a division into religious and non-religious schools had arisen. Modernists, Bleeker prompted, should finally accept that. By law, their religious principles could not be realised in public schools. Moreover, public school teachers were appointed by members of municipal councils, who “do not care about religious things. [...] They do not and are not allowed to ask whether [a candidate] is religious or irreligious, whether his moral sense is rooted in a belief in God or founded on a utilitarian philosophy of life.”<sup>136</sup> At the 1910 NPB meeting, public school teacher R. van Yperen openly supported Pattist and Bleeker. If public education continued to be permeated with a materialistic instead of a religious spirit, he thought, then

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NPB meeting held that same year, it was decided to explore the possibilities of founding a college of education on modernist principles. The *Haagsch Genootschap* picked up this idea in 1909 and put it into practice in 1910. See: J. Bruining, ‘Kan de openbare lagere school bij de tegenwoordige regeling voldoen aan de eischen, die wij voor de zedelijk-godsdienstige vorming van ons volk daaraan mogen stellen?’, appendix to *Ibid.* 1906-21 (26 May 1906), 13-18; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De samenkomsten te Groningen’, *Ibid.* 1906-44 (3 November 1906), 348-349; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Godsdienstonderwijs voor aanst. onderwijzers’, *Ibid.* 1907-45 (9 November 1907), 354; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Een kweekschool in vrijz. godsdienstigen geest’, *Ibid.* 1909-19 (8 May 1909), 1909-20 (15 May 1909), 154-155; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De kweekschool van het Haagsch Genootschap’, *Ibid.* 1910-09 (12 February 1910), 52; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De inwijding der kweekschool van het Haagsch Genootschap’, *Ibid.* 1910-19 (7 May 1910), 148-149; H.J. Wilzen, ‘Schets van 75 jaar onderwijs bij het Haagsch Genootschap’, in: J.P. Heering et al., *Op de bres. 200 jaar Haagsch Genootschap tot verdediging van de christelijke godsdienst (1785-1985)* (Zoetermeer 1985), 71-108, there 71-73.

<sup>134</sup> J.N. Pattist, *Openbaar onderwijs of niet? Van een vrijzinnig christelijk standpunt* (Baarn 1910).

<sup>135</sup> D. Langedijk, *Groen van Prinsterer en de schoolkwestie* (The Hague 1947), 24.

<sup>136</sup> “...naar godsdienstige dingen niet omzien. [...] Of hij godsdienstig is of ongodsdienstig, of zijn zedelijkheid voortspuit uit Godsgeloof dan wel of hij er een nuttigheidsmoraal op nahoudt, er wordt eenvoudig niet naar gevraagd en er mag ook niet naar gevraagd worden.” Quoted from: J.J. Bleeker, “Openbaar onderwijs of niet?”, *De Hervorming* 1910-17 (23 April 1910), 130-131, there 131. See also: J.J. Bleeker, ‘De tijden veranderen en met hen ook de mensen’, *Ibid.* 1910-03 (15 January 1910), 18-19.

“modernists’ spiritual needs will necessitate the founding of modernist private schools.”<sup>137</sup> F.E. van Santen, who together with Bleeker belonged to the theologically most extreme right wing of the modernist movement, urged modernists eight years later to wait no longer: “I think that it is nearly hopeless to win adults over to religion. We therefore need to concentrate our efforts on the youth. We must, in any way whatsoever, make sure that the youth no longer grows up without any knowledge of the things stemming from the spirit of God. [...] Many bad things have been said in our circles about the so-called Christian schools – I would like to say many more bad things about the neutral, meaning irreligious schools.”<sup>138</sup>

Although H.T. de Graaf could still write in late 1921 that “voices can be heard in support of liberal religious schools,” such schools did not get off the ground;<sup>139</sup> that is to say, modernist *primary* schools, on which the discussion about education had concentrated so far. In 1929, a modernist *secondary* school, the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum* (Liberal Christian Grammar School) opened its doors in The Hague, followed by a second one in 1944.<sup>140</sup> According to J.A.J. Jousma (1907-?), headmaster of the first *Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum* between 1950 and 1964, attempts were made to establish modernist grammar schools in Amsterdam and Rotterdam as well, yet he does not substantiate this claim.<sup>141</sup> In any case, the fact that a modernist secondary school only came into being in The Hague undoubtedly had to do with local modernists’ high level of organisation. Since 1923, Remonstrants, members of the NPB, and Dutch Reformed, Lutheran and Mennonite modernists living in The Hague worked together in a federation, which was intended to prevent modernists from being completely shouted down by the far better organised Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant communities.<sup>142</sup> To fulfil this intention, a majority in the federation deemed it necessary to found a grammar school on modernist principles. After all, as argued in a brochure issued in 1927, secondary schools engrossed their pupils to an even greater extent than primary schools.<sup>143</sup> Adolescence, the brochure continued, is the time in a person’s life when spiritual needs begin to make themselves

<sup>137</sup> “...dan zullen de godsdienstige behoeften der modernen zeker eens noodig maken de oprichting van moderne particuliere scholen.” Quoted from: [R. van Yperen in:] ‘De Zwolsche samenkomst’, *Ibid.* 1910-45 (5 November 1910), 354-357, there 356. See also: [R. van Yperen in:] *Handelingen NPB 1910*, 52-56, there 62.

<sup>138</sup> “Ik geloof, dat het vrijwel hopeloos is om de ouderen nog te winnen voor den godsdienst. Wij moeten ons dus vooral bepalen tot de jeugd. En wij moeten – op welke wijze dan ook – zorgen, dat de jeugd niet verder opgroeie zonder eenige kennis van de dingen, die des geestes Gods zijn. [...] Er is in onze kringen veel kwaad gezegd van de z.g. Christelijke scholen – ik zou nog veel meer kwaad willen zeggen van de neutrale, d.w.z. godsdienstlooze school.” Quoted from: F.E. van Santen, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De kwijnende godsdienst’, *De Hervorming* 1918-22 (1 June 1918), 85-86, there 86.

<sup>139</sup> “...stemmen opgaan voor vrijzinnig-godsdienstige scholen...” Quoted from: H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – De openbare school’, *Ibid.* 1921-46 (19 November 1921), 364-365.

<sup>140</sup> Until 1947, this *Tweede Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum* (Second Liberal Christian Grammar School) was an annex to the original *Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum*, which now came to be supplied with the adjective ‘eerste’ (‘first’). It was located in The Hague as well. See: F. Boersma, *Het Tweede VCL. De geschiedenis van een merkwaardige school* (The Hague 1999), 9, 21-22.

<sup>141</sup> J.A.J. Jousma, ‘Het eerste V.C.L. 1929-1964’, in: W.M. van der Mast et al. (eds.), *Jaarboek Geschiedkundige Vereniging “Die Haghe” 1979* (The Hague s.a.), 15-78, there 18. Together with another article included in this yearbook – W.G. Noordegraaf, ‘Het eerste V.C.L. 1929-1964’, 79-118 – and added with a list of all (former) students and directors, this article was issued as a separate book that same year, titled ‘*Het eerste V.C.L. eender en anders. Historische schets van het Eerste Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum*’.

<sup>142</sup> There was also a federation of liberal Protestant groups in Rotterdam, but only in the south of the city. Not mentioning Rotterdam, Boersma argues that The Hague was a place where a federation came into being because the local community of modernists was large and wealthy enough to found one. See: Boersma, *Het Tweede VCL*, 22-23.

<sup>143</sup> Jousma erroneously states that this brochure was issued in 1929. See: Jousma, ‘Het eerste V.C.L.’, 16.

felt and personality takes shape. ‘Neutrality’ could not satisfy these needs and could not contribute to the ripening of one’s personality: “spiritual development is neglected too much if it is not explicitly included in the aim of the school.” Moreover, since 1917, the year in which public and denominational education had become entirely equal to the law, no one could still cherish the hope that children from different religious backgrounds would one day all attend the same schools. Whereas Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants could profess their faith in the classroom, modernists’ preference for public education forced them “to always concede to the irreligious and the anti-religious.” A modernist grammar school, the brochure concluded, was therefore urgently needed.<sup>144</sup>

Although they were represented in the federation, the boards of the local VVH and NPB branches were highly critical of the endeavour, and so was Dutch Reformed minister G. Hulsman (1867-1958), none other than the founder of the federation. In *Het Vaderland*, he expressed a fear that only the well-to-do would profit from modernist grammar schools, as the enrolment fees in higher secondary education in general were high. By saying this, Hulsman showed that he was well aware of the higher-class image modernism had, and of the fact that a modernist grammar school would strengthen this image, diminishing the already minimal appeal the modernist movement had. Being politically liberal himself, Hulsman also implied to fear that socialist and antimilitarist modernists would misuse such a school to indoctrinate adolescents with their political views. A final, and most fundamental, reason for Hulsman to oppose the endeavour was the possibility the law offered to organise religious education within the frame of public schools. Modernists, he exhorted, should put more work into that, as it gave them the opportunity to reach and potentially influence tens of thousands of non-modernist children as well.<sup>145</sup> Particularly this last reason will have been decisive enough for the majority of Dutch modernists not to found denominational schools, either primary or secondary, of their own.<sup>146</sup> The establishment of the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum* in The Hague was not copied elsewhere.

<sup>144</sup> “De geestelijke beschaving komt al te zeer in het gedrang, als deze niet bewust in de bedoeling der school is opgenomen.”; “...dat het vrijz. protestantisme altijd concessies zal moeten doen aan de niet- of a-religieusen.” Quoted in: ‘Een vrijzinnig-christelijk lyceum’, *Het Vaderland* (7 October 1927), evening paper A, 2. See also: ‘Het Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum – Zal het er komen?’, *Ibid.* (13 October 1927), evening paper A, 1; F. Kleyn, ‘De achtergrond der gedachte aan een vrijz.-chr. lyceum’, *Ibid.* (19 October 1927), evening paper B, 1.

<sup>145</sup> G. Hulsman, ‘Het Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum’, *Ibid.* (20 October 1927), evening paper B, 2; G. Hulsman, ‘Het Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum’, *Ibid.* (24 October 1927), evening paper B, 1; G. Hulsman, ‘Het Vrijz. Christ. Lyceum’, *Ibid.* (26 October 1927), evening paper B, 2. Minister F. Kleyn particularly blamed Hulsman for suggesting that the modernist grammar school meant to propagate socialist views among youngsters. See: F. Kleyn, ‘Het Vrijz. Christelijk Lyceum’, *Ibid.* (22 October 1927), evening paper D, 2. Engineer B.M. Gratama (1861-1944) denounced Hulsman’s critique, while Doe Hans shared Hulsman’s political concerns. See: B.M. Gramata and D. Hans, ‘Het Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum’, *Ibid.* (25 October 1927), morning paper A, 1. The discussion on modernist schools briefly flared up in *De Stroom*, but did not bring forth new arguments. See: H. Boschma, ‘Godsdienstige opvoeding – Over de wenschelijkheid van het oprichten van bijzondere vrijzinnig-godsdienstige scholen’, *De Stroom* IX.26 (31 May 1930), 3-5; J.A. Loué, ‘Godsdienstige opvoeding – Bijzondere vrijzinnig-godsdienstige scholen?’, *Ibid.* IX.28 (14 June 1930), 2; R.C. Gravestein, T. Langejan and A. Wielenga, ‘Met onze lezers’, *Ibid.* IX.29 (21 June 1930), 5; A.d.V.v.S. and C.H.P. Makkink, ‘Met onze lezers’, *Ibid.* IX.30 (28 June 1930), 5-6. The editors, expecting to receive far more than six short reactions to Boschma’s article, disappointingly concluded that modernists were generally indifferent towards the subject of education.

<sup>146</sup> In a 1932 article in *De Smidse*, public school teacher K. Geertsma (1874-1949) explained that modernists continued to favour public schools for three reasons. First, modernists did not want to cease their efforts to profess their faith in public schools. The ideal of a school based on a ‘Christianity above religious differences’ was too precious to give up. Second, everyone, regardless his or her religious background, was welcome in public schools. Contrary to their denominational counterparts, these schools hence put the Christian principle of brotherhood into practice. Third,



## 6. Dissatisfaction with ‘Neutrality’ (II): Associations on a General Basis

Modernist dissatisfaction with the spirit of religious indifference in political liberalism and public education was part of a larger feeling of marginalisation among modernists, leading to a rethinking of their position in social life. As Remonstrant minister F. Kleyn (1887-1970), who supported the endeavour to establish the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum*, explained in defence of this endeavour, the desire to found a modernist grammar school was just one manifestation of a larger trend in liberal Protestantism. The modernist movement, he set forth, had once completely identified itself with political liberalism. At that time, both in liberal Protestantism and political liberalism, the notion of ‘neutrality’ had been a *Leitmotiv*, as a result of which modernists had not felt the need to establish voluntary associations exclusively based on their religious principles. Yet, the appreciation of ‘neutrality’ in liberal Protestantism and political liberalism had come to differ, due to the development the former had undergone. Compared to the formative years of the modernist movement, liberal Protestantism had lost a good deal of influence and numerical strength. However, it “has gained in spiritual depth and has become more aware of its value.” The awareness had grown that liberal Protestantism was not simply a negation of orthodoxy, but that it had a ‘unique character’ – a term Kleyn did not define. Likewise, the awareness had grown that liberal Protestantism needed “creations, institutions, organs of its own” to give expression to this unique character. Moreover, “the situation outside of the modernist movement itself,” with which Kleyn alluded to the process of pillarisation, forced liberal Protestants to get more organised.<sup>147</sup> Implying that modernists could only avert further social marginalisation if they no longer tried to ignore or resist this process, he later enunciated that “it is at present indispensable to create organisations to exert influence and to re-establish a connection with culture [that is, social life, TK] in general.”<sup>148</sup> In a late 1927 editorial in *Het Vaderland*, J.J. Meyer endorsed Kleyn’s analysis. A modernist could oppose the founding of a separate grammar school, he argued, but not the motivation behind this endeavour:

We do not want to create division. But we do want to propagate a conviction in society. [...] Our liberal Protestantism is rather unknown to this world. [...] But then we have to create opportunities through which the world can get to know us. We need to create organs through which we can express our voice. If we stay hidden in our church buildings, which people are often unable to find, hidden in our own little press [...], then there will certainly be no chance of us permeating the world with the good influence of our principles. If we are willing to give up our aloofness, then we will again be able to influence national life, on which we have woefully lost our grip.<sup>149</sup>

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public schools were organised by the government and as such were a sign that the government cared about the standard of education of the Dutch population. Transferring the power to organise public schools from the government to parents would moreover lead to abuses. See: K. Geertsma, ‘Neutraliteitsproblemen bij ons onderwijs’, *De Smidse* VII.1 (January 1932), 13-27, there 22-24.

<sup>147</sup> “...innerlijk is het verdiept en zich van zijn waarde meer bewust geworden.”; “...eigen scheppingen, instellingen, organen...”; “...de situatie in de wereld buiten het Vrijz. Protestantisme...” Quoted from: F. Kleyn, ‘De achtergrond der gedachte aan een vrijz.-chr. lyceum’, *Het Vaderland* (19 October 1927), evening paper B, 1. See also: F. Kleyn, ‘Referaten van de vergadering van moderne theologen, Amsterdam 29 en 30 April 1930 – Onze houding ten opzichte van eigen middelbaar onderwijs’, *Bijblad van De Stroom* IX.22 (3 May 1930), 7-9.

<sup>148</sup> “Het is in onzen tijd onontbeerlijk, zich te organiseeren, om invloed te oefenen en weer verbinding te krijgen met de algemeene cultuur.” Quoted in: ‘Het Vrijzinnig-Christelijk Lyceum te ’s-Gravenhage’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXV.261 (19 September 1928), evening paper B, 1.

<sup>149</sup> “Splitsen willen wij niet. Maar een overtuiging in de wereld propageeren, dát wel. [...] Men, de wereld, kent ons Vrijzinnig Christendom nog veel te weinig. [...] Maar dan moeten wij ook de gelegenheid scheppen waardoor men

Kleyn's and Meyer's rhetoric echoed that of contemporary Roman Catholics, orthodox Protestants, socialists and basically every other group in the Netherlands pursuing a particular religious or political goal. In Dutch society in the 1920s and 1930s, it was all about 'principles' that needed to be upheld and materialised by means of institutionalisation.<sup>150</sup> By fully exploiting the possibilities mass media and democracy offered them, Roman Catholics and neo-Calvinists had managed to turn their numerical strength into political power and social influence. In certain domains of social life, social democrats had followed them. As an alternative to the Roman Catholic, orthodox Protestant and social democratic 'pillars' that had hence come into being, there were associations on a 'general', 'neutral' basis. But as Kleyn's and Meyer's statements exemplify, modernists' unconditional sympathy for neutrality-favouring liberalism, neutral education and neutral associations in general had flagged. As modernists noticed they were being marginalised and right-wing modernism became more influential in liberal Protestant circles, a growing number of modernists came to feel that 'neutrality' did not do full justice to their 'principles'.

Before the 1910s, the tendency in Roman Catholic and Kuyperian circles to organise themselves separately in all spheres of life, resulting in the emergence of 'pillars', was sharply denounced in the modernist movement.<sup>151</sup> It conflicted with the ideals of national harmony and a free development of religious life. In line with that, the integration of social work, such as district nursing, within the framework of the NPB was ultimately averted. The fear that the modernist movement would develop in a confessionalist direction was too big.<sup>152</sup> On the other hand, confessionalists' display of power, and particularly their willingness to make sacrifices for the creation and preservation of an institutionalised subculture, filled modernists with respect

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*ons kan leren kennen. Wij moeten de organen in het leven roepen waardoor onze stem kan klinken. Als wij verscholen blijven in onze kerkgebouwen, die men vaak niet vinden kan, verscholen blijven in onze eigen kleine pers [...], dan zal er zeker geen kans zijn dat wij den goeden invloed onzer beginselen in de wereld doen doordringen.*" Quoted from: J.J. Meyer, 'Een vrijzinnig-christelijk lyceum', *Het Vaderland* (27 December 1927), evening paper D, 2.

<sup>150</sup> As Van Mourik Broekman explained, 'principles' are essential in life, because they emerge out of life itself and give it a sense of direction. Their content can vary and is less important than the mentality they breed. See: M.C. van Broekman, 'Beginsel-verklaring van het vrijzinnig protestantisme', *De Smidse* VI.7/8 (July/August 1931), 193-205, there 197.

<sup>151</sup> E.g.: B. Tideman Jz., 'Een mannelijk woord', *De Hervorming* 1880-33 (14 August 1880), 129; [N.J. Telders], 'Theorie en praktijk in de Rooms-Katholieke Kerk', *Ibid.* 1896-13 (28 March 1896), 50; Censor [A. Carlier], 'De vroegere dagen beter', *Ibid.* 1896-15 (11 April 1896), 58-59; [N.J. Telders], 'Joviale mensen en joviale beginselen', *Ibid.* 1900-05 (3 February 1900), 36-37; A.W. van Wijk, 'Wat is de beste wijze om onze beginselen tot het volk te brengen?', *Ibid.* 1900-45 (10 November 1900), 345-346, there 346; [N.J. Telders], 'De vreugden van Satan', *Ibid.* 1905-02 (14 January 1905), 10-11; N.J. Telders, 'Teekenen', *Ibid.* 1907-36 (7 September 1907), 282-283; N.J. Telders, 'A kingdom for a cry!', *Ibid.* 1909-10 (6 March 1909), 74; L. Knappert, 'Tegen Rome's overmacht', *Teekenen des Tijds* XIV (1912), 403-424, there 412; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Hooge neutraliteit', *De Hervorming* 1913-26 (28 June 1913), 205.

<sup>152</sup> Yet not everyone agreed with the decision not to conduct social work under the banner of the national NPB. An anonymous member of the NPB branch in Zwolle, one of the branches that was involved with district nursing at the time, argued that activities aimed at moral uplifting could never have a 'neutral' character. "Neutrality," this member concluded, "functions as a pneumatic pump: it pumps away the spirit out of every institution" ("*Neutraliteit doet dienst als een luchtpomp: zij pompt de ziel weg uit elken kring en elke instelling*"). See: 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond – Afdeeling Zwolle', *Ibid.* 1898-40 (1 October 1898), 160. If the NPB was not willing to organise district nursing on a liberal religious basis, Hille Ris Lambers implied in a 1912 article, then liberal and orthodox members of the Dutch Reformed Church should at least organise district nursing on an ecclesial basis. This was necessary because Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants would otherwise have an open field, as district nursing on a 'neutral' basis did not allow for overt religious commitment. See: C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Moeten wij hervormden de voorkeur geven aan wijkverpleging vanwege eene kerk, of vanwege neutrale vereenigingen, als b.v. het Groene Kruis?', *Teekenen des Tijds* XIV (1912), 136-146, there 140-142.

and even some jealousy. As early as the 1880s, some modernists held up the tightly organised Anti-Revolutionary Party, the founding of the Free University in Amsterdam and the establishing of *dolerende* congregations as examples to their co-religionists. They did not argue that modernists should adopt the Kuyparian urge for institutional isolation just like that, but rather that the formation of neo-Calvinist institutions should remind modernists that ‘religion’ was not a domain separated from and alongside ‘society’. The way in which confessionalists related religion and society – creating an antithesis along dogmatic lines – was wrong, but they were right to profess and to practise that a relationship between religion and society as such indeed existed. Moreover, confessionalists managed to constantly find new methods to spread their principles, such as evangelisation by means of a widespread dissemination of sermons and open-air meetings.<sup>153</sup>

Whereas confessionalists were thus able to make themselves clearly heard, modernists increasingly felt that they were being silenced in institutions and organisations based on the notion of ‘neutrality’ – not only in public schools. In 1912, Remonstrant minister H.P. Schim van der Loeff (1879-1949) could still argue that modernists were better off in neutral associations, as these offered them the possibility to exert personal influence on non-modernists, but this conviction had already come under pressure.<sup>154</sup> As early as 1889, J. Herderscheê complained that modernists’ opinions and contribution to the common good remained unnoticed.<sup>155</sup> In the 1910s, when the process of pillarisation began to near its completion and malcontentism unleashed a process of

<sup>153</sup> E.g.: [H.G. Hagen in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – ’s-Gravenhage’, *De Hervorming* 1880-50 (11 December 1880), 198; J. Rinner, ‘Iets over zondagsscholen’, *Ibid.* 1881-36 (16 September 1881), 146; [H.U. Meyboom in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – Assen’, *Ibid.* 1883-50 (15 December 1883), 200; W., ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1887-20 (14 May 1887), 79-80, there 80; A.W. van Wijk, ‘Rede, uitgesproken in de godsdienstoefening bij gelegenheid der algemeene vergadering van den Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* 1891-45 (7 November 1891), 179-180, there 179; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘Over onze inwendige zending’, *Ibid.* 1897-11 (13 March 1897), 41-42, there 41; Censor [A. Carlier], ‘Maatschappelijke belangen – Wijkverpleegsters’, *Ibid.* 1898-40 (1 October 1898), 160; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Leiden’, *Ibid.* 1899-13 (1 April 1899), 50; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘Een gezegend werk’, *Ibid.* 1904-02 (9 January 1904), 10-11, there 11; K., ‘Berichten, enz. – Het komende seizoen’, *Ibid.* 1909-37 (11 September 1909), 292; K., ‘Berichten, enz. – Samenwerking’, *Ibid.* 1910-10 (5 March 1910), 76; J. van Loenen Martinet, ‘Openingsrede’, *Ibid.* 1911-44 (4 November 1911), 349-351, there 350; H.G. Cannegieter, ‘Redactioneel – Een bedelpartij’, *Ibid.* 1916-41 (7 October 1916), 352; A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Over de finantiën’, *Ibid.* 1919-28 (12 July 1919), 123; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De moederkerk ten voorbeeld?’, *Ibid.* 1921-17 (30 April 1921), 132-134; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Hoofdartikel – Propaganda’, *Ibid.* 1924-37 (13 September 1924), 290-291; D. Drijver, ‘Binnenland – Overreding van andersdenkenden’, *Ibid.* 1928-08 (1 September 1928), 63-64, there 63.

<sup>154</sup> H.P. Schim van der Loeff, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Den heer Menno Huizinga Jr.’, *Ibid.* 1912-01 (6 January 1912), 6-7, there 7. Emilie Knappert stressed that contact with non-modernists in neutral associations was also beneficial to modernists themselves, as it contributed to their own spiritual development. See: E.C. Knappert, ‘Maatschappelijk werk’, *Ibid.* 1912-42 (19 October 1912), 335-336, there 336. At the 1912 NPB meeting, H.T. de Graaf urged modernists not to break with neutral associations. Rather, they should increase their efforts to exert more influence within such associations. See: [H.T. de Graaf in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De algemeene vergadering’, *Ibid.* 1912-44 (2 November 1912), 356-358, there 357.

<sup>155</sup> J. Herderscheê, ‘De tarwekorrel’, *Ibid.* 1889-18 (4 May 1889), 69. Agreeing with Herderscheê that modernists “are virtually everywhere in the minority” and that they “are sometimes being set back in social life [while] having a subordinate position in church life,” H. Oort argued in 1903 that this was not only “to the detriment of the highest interests of our fellow human beings”; it also “puts our own faith to test”: modernists could become defeatist, thinking that it was a waste of effort to aim at spreading their principles in society. (“*Dat wij schier overal in de minderheid zijn...*”; “...[dat] wij somwijlen in het maatschappelijk leven achteruitgezet worden en in de kerkelijke wereld eene ondergeschikte plaats innemen.”; “...dat de hoogste belangen onzer medemenschen geschaad worden...”); “...dat ons eigen geloof [...] op een zware proef wordt gesteld.”) Quoted from: H. Oort, *Zwaar maar zegenrijk. Twee voordrachten over de waarde der vrijzinnige godsdienstrichting* (Assen 1905), 2. [This brochure contains the speech with which Oort had opened the international congress of religious liberals in Amsterdam in 1903, from which the quotes above are taken, and the speech with which he had inaugurated the general NPB meeting of 1904.]

critical self-reflection in modernist circles, such sentiments increased. In 1910, for example, Dutch Reformed minister F.H.G. van Irterson (1878-1955), noticing “turbulence,” “dynamism” and “a thirst to explore new avenues” in the modernist movement, called on the NPB to organise propagandistic open-air meetings to make modernists better heard.<sup>156</sup> Eight years later, A.H. van der Hoeve tried to raise modernists’ awareness of having “a principle of their own” and hoped that this awareness would stimulate them not to satisfy themselves with neutral associations too easily. Social work on a neutral basis, he alleged, was not beneficial to the realisation of the liberal Protestant “religious principle of humanity” in every case.<sup>157</sup> In 1919, to name a last example, H.T. de Graaf alarmingly told his fellow modernists in *De Hervorming* that “we do not exist.” In society, politics and academia, liberal Protestantism was not counted among the ideological currents for which consideration should be shown. For this, De Graaf accentuated, modernists should not only blame confessionalists’ intolerance, but also themselves: “religious liberals will only get to organise themselves if they are almost squashed to death.” Now that social life was becoming ever more compartmentalised along ideological lines, modernists were beginning to pay for their lack of organisation.<sup>158</sup>

Sentiments such as these, welling up across the whole of the modernist movement, raised the question whether modernists should try to make their influence more felt in neutral associations or establish associations on a liberal Protestant basis.<sup>159</sup> As shown, some dissatisfied modernists with a politically liberal persuasion began to organise themselves between the mid-1910s and 1930s – yet only as ‘pressure groups’ *within* or *in addition to* existing liberal parties, not as new, separate parties. As their reflections upon the relationship between religious and social life remained rather vague, these groups failed to attract large support and quickly perished. Moreover, ‘pressure groups’ such as the Religious Democratic Circle within the VDB and the *Vrijheidsbond*-minded Association of Modernist Liberals soon became less needed to resist the perceived spirit of religious difference in political liberalism: both the VDB and the *Vrijheidsbond* included sentences in their political programmes in which the significance of Christianity for national life was recognised, and became more receptive to expressions of

<sup>156</sup> “*Er is roering in onze kringen. Er is beweging in onze gelederen. Er is uitzien naar nieuwe wegen.*” Quoted from: F.H.G. van Irterson, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Openlucht-samenkomsten’, *De Hervorming* 1910-42 (15 October 1910), 334.

<sup>157</sup> “*...een eigen beginsel...*”; “*...godsdienstig humaniteitsbeginsel...*” Quoted from: A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Geloof en daad’, *Ibid.* 1918-26 (29 June 1918), 103.

<sup>158</sup> “*Wij bestaan niet.*”; “*De vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen worden toch nooit tot organisatie bewogen, voor dat ze zoowat doodgedrukt zijn.*” Quoted from: H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Wij bestaan niet’, *Ibid.* 1919-52 (27 December 1919), 240. Van Dam is right to argue that social life was not entirely pillarised, but it cannot be denied that the amount of separate institutions based on particular ideological principles increased in the early twentieth century and that those communities traditionally associated with pillarisation – Roman Catholics, neo-Calvinists and social democrats – demanded to have their interests met, which they were able to do precisely because of their high level of organisation. Cf.: Van Dam, *Staat van verzuiling*. Van Mourik Broekman agreed with De Graaf: liberal Protestantism went unnoticed. The general public completely identified religion with orthodoxy and did not bother to reckon with liberal Protestants. See: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Gesteldheden en verwachtingen betreffende het vrijzinnig protestantisme’, *De Smidse* VIII.7/8 (July/August 1933), 193-205, there 202. See also: N.A. Bruining, ‘De Centrale Commissie en de kerkelijke groepen’, in: *De Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme* [nameless, unpublished document, yet recorded in the Dutch Central Catalogue under this title] (Utrecht 1937), 3-13, there 11.

<sup>159</sup> Or, as it was formulated during the annual meeting of the VVH in 1917, whether ‘religiously liberal’ can go hand in hand with ‘neutral’. See: I.M.J. Hoog, ‘Redactioneel – De Amsterdamsche vergaderingen’, *De Hervorming* 1917-16 (21 April 1917), 132-133, there 133.

religion in their party culture.<sup>160</sup> As for the Association of Modernist Liberals, its other goal to make a stand against the overrepresentation of antimilitarist and socialist opinions in modernist periodicals soon lost a good deal of its significance as well: Kokje and Boenders, the editors of *Onze Wachter*, had to acknowledge that, “not through our agency,” the liberal Protestant press sang a different tune at the end of the 1930s than it had sung at the beginning of that decade.<sup>161</sup> As the dissatisfaction with the neutral basis of public education was concerned, only some modernists in The Hague were willing to give up the attempt to permeate public schools with a religious spirit. In three other fields, however, full modernist alternatives to neutral institutions did indeed get off the ground, those being the fields of aid for neglected children, youth work and radio broadcasting. As the motivations behind the founding of these organisations evince, the modernist Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women, modernist student and youth leagues and the Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation all came into being after the example of similar confessionalist initiatives and with the intention of counteracting the gradual marginalisation of liberal Protestantism in social life.

## 7. Case I: The Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women

Although it was founded during the 1886 annual NPB meeting, the Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women was not integrated into the framework of the NPB, for the same reason discussed in relation to district nursing. It aimed to help boys and girls whose parents were unable to give them a decent upbringing, older girls “who need a stricter upbringing than the one they receive from their parents or caretakers,” single mothers, and profligate women “who are willing to leave behind their lives of sin and shame.”<sup>162</sup> The association tried to establish relief centres – ‘asylums’ in contemporary parlance – that were intended to be, as those involved with the association straightforwardly admitted, modernist equivalents to the so-called ‘*Heldringgestichten*’. The latter had been founded by O.G. Heldring (1804-1876), one of the central figures in the Dutch *Réveil* movement, and provided uncared-for children with an orthodox Protestant upbringing. By founding asylums of their own, the supporters of the association accentuated, liberal Protestants should increase their visibility in the sphere of social assistance, not giving orthodox the opportunity to monopolise philanthropy.<sup>163</sup> The association collected enough money to open three asylums: one in Breukelen in 1887 (moved to Apeldoorn in 1889), a second one in Apeldoorn in 1894, and another one in Epe in 1901. Because these asylums were meant to be temporary shelters, in which children could await their transfer to a

<sup>160</sup> For the VDB, see the paragraphs on the Religious Democratic Circle in section 4 of this chapter. For the *Vrijheidsbond*, see: M.P. Kokje, ‘Herziening in de Liberale Staatspartij’, *Onze Wachter* VI.2 (28 February 1938), 2-3.

<sup>161</sup> Kokje and Boenders did not explicate which reasons had caused the liberal Protestant press to sing a different tune, but they did drop a hint. They stated that many modernist preachers had embraced more ‘nationalistic’ views. Apparently, the threat of German expansionism had made antimilitarist opinions less popular. See: [M.P. Kokje and F.C.M. Boenders], ‘Bij het 5-jarig bestaan van “Onze Wachter”’, *Ibid.* VI.1 (31 January 1938), 1.

<sup>162</sup> “...die strengere leiding behoeven, dan zij van hare ouders of voogden ontvangen.”; “...die bereid zijn haar leven van zonde en schande te verlaten.” Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen’, *De Hervorming* 1886-45 (6 November 1886), 181. The first formulation probably referred to girls with a socially low background who might fall into prostitution.

<sup>163</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Eene nieuwe vereeniging’, *Ibid.* 1886-48 (27 November 1886), 192; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen’, *Ibid.* 1893-28 (15 July 1893), 111; ‘Verwaarloosde kinderen’, *Ibid.* 1898-24 (11 June 1898), 95; J. Herman de Ridder, ‘Van het verwaarloosde kind’, *Ibid.* 1900-49 (8 December 1900), 379; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De Vereeniging tot Steun’, *Ibid.* 1902-16 (19 April 1902), 124-125; *De Vereeniging “Tot Steun”* (s.l. [±1905]), 8.

foster home, a discussion, referred to in chapter 6, flared up evolving around the question of whether foster homes really had to be favoured over long-term institutional care.

Another discussion had to do with the intention of the association to work in ‘a liberal Protestant spirit’. There was no consensus among modernists as to which consequences this intention should have in practice. Did it mean that children, irrespective of their religious background, should be instilled with a liberal Protestant way of believing in the asylums and should ultimately be housed in liberal Protestant foster homes? Or did it mean that the association, taking the liberal Protestant principle of tolerance for every religious conviction as its guideline, should try to make sure that children with a Roman Catholic or orthodox Protestant background received an upbringing in accordance with their religious background? If the first question was answered affirmatively, some argued, then philanthropy was being misused as a means to make propaganda for liberal Protestantism while it should only be an expression of profound indignation, rooted in personal piety, over social wrongs. These modernists further stressed that if the association would let its aid depend on denominational preferences, it would act just as wrongly as similar associations on a confessionalist basis.<sup>164</sup> Others, however, felt that if the second question were answered affirmatively, the association would be no different from a neutral one and hence would have no reason to exist. They contended that associations on a dogmatic basis were already trying to find Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant foster families for the uncared-for. What then, they rhetorically asked, was the added value of a modernist basis?<sup>165</sup> The association nonetheless tended to give a negative answer to the first question in practice, as a result of which it constantly complained about a lack of support.<sup>166</sup>

## 8. Case II: Liberal Protestant Student and Youth Leagues

As demonstrated above, the Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women was modelled after older orthodox examples. The same applied to the Liberal Christian League of Students. In the late nineteenth century and in the first decade of the twentieth century, *De Hervorming* regularly contained worrying articles about student life, as did the press in general.<sup>167</sup> These articles put forward two kinds of complaints. First, academia was accused of disseminating a spirit of materialism and intellectualism. When this spirit came to be recognised as the ‘spirit of the age’ in the build-up to the twentieth century, it simultaneously came to be criticised. Academia led students to think that science and scholarship could ultimately solve all the mysteries of existence. As a result, students one-sidedly focused on the development of the intellectual

<sup>164</sup> I.H. Boeke, ‘Berichten, enz. – De Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen in de “Teeken des Tijds”’, *De Hervorming* 1900-33 (18 August 1900), 252; J. Herman de Ridder, ‘Voor de verwaarloosde jeugd’, *Ibid.* 1900-36 (8 September 1900), 275-276; C.J.A. Bosch, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De “Vereeniging tot Steun” en de godsdienstige opvoeding’, *Ibid.* 1907-46 (16 November 1907), 365.

<sup>165</sup> A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘De Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen en de “Teeken des Tijds”’, *Ibid.* 1900-35 (1 September 1900), 266; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘Voor de verwaarloosde jeugd’, *Ibid.* 1900-39 (29 September 1900), 298-299; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, ‘De “Vereeniging tot Steun” en de godsdienstige opvoeding’, *Ibid.* 1907-43 (26 October 1907), 339-340; C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Seniele aftakeling?’, *Ibid.* 1908-05 (1 February 1908), 37; C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘De “Vereeniging tot Steun”’, *Ibid.* 1908-14 (4 April 1908), 107.

<sup>166</sup> E.g.: ‘Verwaarloosde kinderen’, *Ibid.* 1898-24 (11 June 1898), 95; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Toch buiten de lijn!’, *Ibid.* 1908-05 (1 February 1908), 35-36; P. van der Wal, ‘Maatschappelijk leven – De Vereeniging tot steun van verwaarloosden en gevallen’, *De Stroom* V.5 (9 January 1926), 2-3, there 3.

<sup>167</sup> A.C.J. de Vrankrijker, *Vier eeuwen Nederlandsch studentenleven* (Voorburg 1936), 320-343; P.A.J. Caljé, “De omkeer in ‘t studentenleven’”, *Groniek* XXV.118 (1992), 68-93, there 81-82; W. Otterspeer, *De opvoedende kracht van den groentijd. Het Leidse ontgroenschandaal van 1911* (Leiden 1995), 6-7, 14-17, 29-31.

component of their spiritual life, while grossly neglecting its religious and ethical components.<sup>168</sup> Second, the way in which student culture had developed in the nineteenth century resulted in moral excesses. Conflicting with the liberal-bourgeois civilising offensive and similar confessionalist attempts to increase people's moral standard, visits to brothels, excessive drinking and demeaning initiation rites ('*ontgroening*') had become accepted practices in nineteenth-century student life. In the modernist press, it was stressed that many students lacked the sense of responsibility to be 'spiritual aristocrats'.<sup>169</sup>

This dissatisfaction with the 'materialistic' and 'immoral' student culture yet only led to the founding of liberal Protestant student associations *after* the establishing of separate orthodox Protestant and Roman Catholic student bodies.<sup>170</sup> The latter came into being as of the 1880s, having started as study circles in the 1870s.<sup>171</sup> In 1886, the foundations were laid for a national union of neo-Calvinist-oriented student associations, called '*Societas Studiosorum Reformatorum*' ('Reformed Student Society' or SSR). Student associations for Roman Catholics emerged from 1889 onwards.<sup>172</sup> Slightly different in character was the *Nederlandsche Christen-Studenten Vereeniging* (Dutch Christian Student Association or NCSV). Founded in 1896, it did not want to separate its members from student life at large, as the SSR and Catholic student associations in practice did, but rather aimed to prepare students for permeating student life at large with a 'better' spirit.<sup>173</sup> It organised lectures in university towns and annual national conferences, in order to let students reflect upon religious, ethical and social issues, to reinforce a

<sup>168</sup> E.g.: F., 'Houdt goeden moed!', *De Hervorming* 1905-13 (1 April 1905), 98-99; H.Y. Groenewegen, 'De student en de godsdienst', *Ibid.* 1915-08 (20 February 1915), 65-67; 1915-09 (27 February 1915), 74-75.

<sup>169</sup> E.g.: E.J.W. Koch, 'Verblijvend', *Ibid.* 1880-43 (23 October 1880), 170; E.J.W. Koch, 'Hervorming der drinkgewoonten onder studenten', *Ibid.* 1894-24 (16 June 1894), 95-96; M., 'Een ergerlijk misbruik', *Ibid.* 1897-43 (23 October 1897), 170; H. de Lang, 'Het groenwezen', *Ibid.* 1904-32 (6 August 1904), 249-250; 1904-33 (13 August 1904), 257-258; A. van Herwerden-Steffens, 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1904-40 (1 October 1904), 318; H. de Lang, 'Professorale adviezen', *Ibid.* 1910-22 (28 May 1910), 169-170; C. Hille Ris Lambers, F.W. Drijver and H. de Lang, 'Ingezonden stukken – "Professorale adviezen"', *Ibid.* 1910-25 (18 June 1910), 196-197. Comparing contemporary student life to that in the nineteenth century, G. Horreüs de Haas wrote in 1925 to notice a turn for the better. Yet, he was displeased to see that there were still students who acted as if they were detached from 'social reality', giving themselves over to licentiousness and luxury, participating in bacchanalia, and having no concern for the socially less fortunate. He stressed that students had the moral duty to spiritually arm themselves against such a materialistic conduct in life and to contribute to bringing a socialist society into being. See: G. Horreüs de Haas, *Student en maatschappij* (Amsterdam 1925), 3-6, 20-23.

<sup>170</sup> In retrospective, A.H. Nooy van der Kolff (1893-1936), who was highly involved with liberal Protestant student associations, reasoned that this dissatisfaction was at the bottom of the founding of those associations. See: A.H. Nooy van der Kolff, 'De religieuze jeugdbeweging', *De Hervorming* 1925-05 (31 January 1925), 35-36. J. de Graaf agreed. The shock that the First World War brought about in the mid-1910s contributed to the rise of those associations, but a larger feeling of dissatisfaction with materialism was at the root of their founding. See: J. de Graaf, '20 jaar VCSB', in: *Vierde lustrum Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond 1915-1935* (s.l. [1935]), 43-51, there 44.

<sup>171</sup> According to Caljé, associations of orthodox Protestant and Roman Catholic students originally did not have the intention to completely separate their members from student life in general. Their emergence had rather to do with the influx of students with an orthodox Protestant or Roman Catholic background, nearly all of whom did not belong to the upper class, into academia: the traditional student bodies, the '*corpora*', had an elitist character and charged high membership fees. The motive to build a faith-based student life next to, and isolated from, student life at large only came to play a role in the 1910s. See: P.A.J. Caljé, *Student, universiteit en samenleving. De Groningse universiteit in de negentiende eeuw* (Hilversum 2009), 525-526.

<sup>172</sup> A.C. Flipse, *Christelijke wetenschap. Nederlandse rooms-katholieken en gereformeerden over de natuurwetenschap, 1880-1940* (Hilversum 2014), 134-137.

<sup>173</sup> The NCSV accepted students who were already members of another student body or who did not belong to any student body. It was thus possible to be a member of the SSR and of the NCSV simultaneously. By contrast, a member of the SSR could not at the same time be a member of a *corps*.

spirit of brotherhood among them, and to give them the opportunity to intensify their relationship with Christ. The emergence of the NCSV, which was stamped by moderate *ethische* orthodoxy but explicitly welcomed neo-Calvinists and modernists as well – the NCSV even sent a notice of its first summer conference to *De Hervorming* –, gave liberal Protestant students a push to found faith-based student associations of their own.<sup>174</sup> The NCSV, the latter quickly realised, was not able to offer them what they were looking for: its Bible- and Christ-centredness smacked too much of a supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity.<sup>175</sup> It did offer them, however, a model to copy. In 1902, liberal Protestant students in Groningen were the first to establish a *vrijzinnig-godsdienstige studentenvereniging* (liberal religious student association). Their initiative was followed in Utrecht in 1909 and Leiden in 1912.<sup>176</sup> All of these associations were intended to advance students' spiritual growth as well as their ethical idealism, and were open to all students – just as the NCSV branches, yet focusing on the spiritual values rooted in the Christian tradition instead of exclusively on the person of Christ. Feeling that a concentration of forces was needed to let liberal Protestantism exert the strongest possible influence on student life, H.Y. Groenewegen urged them to join together, which they did on 8 December 1915 in the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Studentenbond*.<sup>177</sup> Quickly afterwards, the VCSB expanded to all other towns with a university or other institute of higher education.<sup>178</sup>

<sup>174</sup> Van Loenen Martinet was highly critical of this notice. It was written in an orthodox vocabulary and led him to think that the NCSV fostered 'mysticism'. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Van de Ned. Christen-Studenten Vereeniging', *De Hervorming* 1896-34 (22 August 1896), 135. Kuyper, on the other hand, criticised the NCSV for lacking dogmatic boundaries. He felt that neo-Calvinist students could not be part of a religious association that was also open to modernists. See: A.J. van den Berg, *De Nederlandse Christen-Studenten Vereniging, 1896-1985* ('s-Gravenhage 1991), 34-35. Membership of the NCSV remained controversial in neo-Calvinist circles. See: J.J. Buskes, *Hoera voor het leven* (Amsterdam 1959), 59-60; Van den Berg, *De Nederlandse Christen-Studenten Vereniging*, 95-103.

<sup>175</sup> C. de Jongh, 'Berichten, enz. – De Vrijz.-Christ. Studentenvereniging te Leiden', *De Hervorming* 1912-46 (16 November 1912), 374; [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – De Vrijz. Chr. Stud. Bond', *Ibid.* 1916-24 (10 June 1916), 201; Van den Berg, *De Nederlandse Christen-Studenten Vereniging*, 82-90.

<sup>176</sup> D. Tjalsma, 'De Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond', in: C. Boer et al. (eds.), *Het jonge hart. Het verhaal van de Vrijzinnig Christelijke Jeugd Centrale, 1915-1985* (Zoetermeer 1994), 20-105, there 20-21. Next to the liberal religious student associations in Groningen, Utrecht and Leiden, a '*studentenvereniging ter behandeling van ethische en godsdienstige vraagstukken*' (student association for the discussion of ethical and religious issues) was founded in Leiden in 1907 and Delft in 1910. Though not officially, both of these associations undeniably had a modernist orientation. B.D. Eerdman and J.P. Kuenen (1866-1922), a physicist who was Abraham Kuenen's son, were the first to give presentations in the Leiden association, while Eerdman also was the first to lecture in Delft. See: J.C.A. Fetter, 'Vereniging voor ethische en godsdienstige vraagstukken', *De Hervorming* 1907-48 (30 November 1907), 379-380; Z.Th.F., 'Berichten, enz. – Uit Delft', *Ibid.* 1910-50 (10 December 1910), 396-397. In a lecture he gave in the Leiden association on 27 October 1911, S.K. Bakker emphasised that students should act in accordance with their status as 'spiritual aristocrats' of the future ("*geestelijke leidlieden der natie*"), by openly declaring themselves against immorality and by leading lives of high moral standing. See: S.K. Bakker, *Heeft de student zedelijke plichten?* (Leiden 1911), 11-12, 18-19. Bakker's lecture was supposed to be the first publication in a series of brochures issued on behalf of the *studentenvereniging ter behandeling van ethische en godsdienstige vraagstukken* in Leiden, yet it remained the only one.

The history of these associations is rather obscure. The one in Leiden still existed in 1912 and the one in Delft showed activity until at least 1913, but it is unknown when either of them perished. Tjalsma mentions the existence of a third '*studentenvereniging ter behandeling van ethische en godsdienstige vraagstukken*', located in Amsterdam and apparently 'thriving'.

<sup>177</sup> For Groenewegen's plea, see: [H.Y. Groenewegen in: H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – De Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenvereniging te Leiden', *De Hervorming* 1915-14 (3 April 1915), 119-120; H.Y. Groenewegen, *De student en de godsdienst* (Leiden 1915), 19-23.

<sup>178</sup> In Delft and Wageningen in 1916, in Amsterdam in 1917, and in Rotterdam in 1918. See: Tjalsma, 'De Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond', 21.



The VCSB ultimately aimed at being the breeding ground for the liberal Protestant leaders of the future. It wanted to prepare those individuals who, based on their intellectual capacities, were expected to obtain key positions in society for carrying liberal Protestant principles into social life with the intention to turn liberal Protestantism into a more influential cultural force than it had been so far.<sup>179</sup> To further spread liberal Protestant ethical and religious idealism among youngsters – a broad category roughly encompassing twelve- to thirty-five-year-olds – who did not, or not yet, receive higher education and who had, or did not have, a liberal Protestant background, leading modernist theologians helped to get several other organisations off the ground: the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jongerenbond*, which primarily consisted of urban young adults, in 1919; the *Rijzende Kerk* (Emerging Church), which targeted the early-adult rural population and was more closely attached to congregational life than the VCSB and VCJB, in 1928; and the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jeugdgemeenschappenbond* (Liberal Christian League of Youth Communities or VCJGB), the members of which mostly attended secondary schools, in 1932.<sup>180</sup>

As this proliferation of leagues evinces, the modernist youth was, more pronouncedly than the orthodox, not only organised on the basis of age, but also along the lines of social difference. In orthodoxy, the ultimate purpose of youth work was ‘*geloofsoverdracht*’ and ‘*geloofsbehoud*’ or the development and preservation of a personal relationship with the living Christ within the ‘right’ dogmatic framework. This framework – the ‘right’ conceptions of faith and the ‘right’ way of believing – was the same to youngsters from all walks of life.<sup>181</sup> In consequence, orthodox youth work was embedded in, or at least closely linked to, church life. After all, the church was the guardian and carrier of the ‘right’ faith. In modernist circles, on the other hand, youth work was about ‘*geloofsverwerving*’ or letting youngsters develop personal conceptions of God. In modernism, there were no theological ‘dogmas’ to pass on. Modernist youth work was therefore more remote from church life.<sup>182</sup> Because of the implicit link made in modernist thinking, as expressed in modernist discourse, between rank and spiritual development, modernist youth work was also socially more differentiated: the spiritual needs and ‘position’ on the ‘ladder’ of spiritual development of individuals in dissimilar social positions were believed to be different. *One* youth league could never be sufficient.<sup>183</sup> This same line of reasoning even caused a minority to plead

<sup>179</sup> E.g.: ‘Redactioneel – Het hoofdbestuur van den Vrijzinnig-Christelijken Studenten-Bond’, *De Hervorming* 1916-20 (13 May 1916), 168-169, there 168; H. Willemse, ‘De belofte van het kader’, *Ibid.* 1926-01 (2 January 1926), 3; J.A. de Koning, *De jeugdbeweging* (Huis ter Heide 1928), 10.

<sup>180</sup> K.M. Witteveen, ‘De andere bonden’, in: Boer et al. (eds.), *Het jonge hart*, 106-203, there 106-110, 124-125, 128-132. In 1924, the *Vrijzinnig-Christelijke Jeugdcentrale* (Liberal Christian Youth Centre or VCJC) was founded as the umbrella organisation of the VCSB, the VCJB and ultimately also of the *Rijzende Kerk* and the VCJGB.

<sup>181</sup> J.C. Sturm, *Een goede gereformeerde opvoeding. Over neo-calvinistische moraalpedagogiek (1880-1950), met speciale aandacht voor de nieuw-gereformeerde jeugdorganisaties* (Kampen 1988), esp. 89-90, 194-197.

<sup>182</sup> According to some, the distance between the VCSB and the VCJB on the one hand and church life on the other hand was even *too* big. See: A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Ook al buiten-kerkelijk?’, *De Hervorming* 1920-05 (7 February 1920), 19; F. Oort, ‘Kerkelijk leven – Vrijzinnige jongerenkerk’, *Ibid.* 1922-45 (11 November 1922), 358; A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven – De jeugdbeweging en de kerk’, *Ibid.* 1924-04 (26 January 1924), 27-29.

<sup>183</sup> Particularly accentuated in: E.C. Knappert, ‘Ingezonden – Winterconferentie van den Vrijzinnig Christelijken Jongeren Bond’, *Ibid.* 1921-02 (15 January 1921), 14-15, there 14; J. Lindeboom, ‘Godsdiensten en wereldbeschouwing – Jeugdwerk op de Drentsche hei’, *Ibid.* 1922-37 (16 September 1922), 291-292, there 292.

for separate church services for youngsters, working-class people and more ‘cultured’ people respectively.<sup>184</sup>

Parallel to the orthodox Protestant network of student associations and *jongelings-, knapen-, meisjes- en jongedochtersverenigingen* (church clubs for elderly and younger boys and girls), a tightly organised modernist youth movement thus emerged in the interwar years. This, the driving forces behind this youth movement felt, was badly needed. As J.A. de Koning, one of those moving spirits, contended, liberal Protestantism simply had to keep up with orthodoxy in this respect: after all, there was a fierce spiritual battle going on staking the souls of the youth and the future of the country.<sup>185</sup>

The youth movement immediately obtained a position of its own within the modernist movement at large, which was accentuated by the separate representation the VCSB and the VCJB received in 1923, next to the various ecclesial groups of modernists and the NPB, in the then newly created Central Committee for Liberal Protestantism. On the one hand, this was so, because the youth movement, as stated above, in large part bypassed denominational life. On the other hand, the youth movement instantaneously became an important constituent of Dutch liberal Protestantism, because it manifested itself with much fervour and was welcomed as a potential booster of renewed vitality and religious renewal in the modernist movement.<sup>186</sup> No one gave more vent to this last expectation than K.H. Roessingh. In a 1925 article in *De Hervorming*, he stated that he felt that modernists had little to be proud of: they had failed to bring forth a theology that was “of overriding importance to cultural life or merely to the modernist movement itself,” to make themselves heard in social life, to bring the social question and ecclesial issues to a satisfactory solution, and to inspire admiration. Amidst all these failures, the modernist youth movement was “the best we have.” Other than in the NPB, the passivity of which he saw reflected in “the gentleman who lectures and the audience that listens,” Roessingh noticed “a lot of very dynamic, sincere, personally and sometimes communally experienced real modernist religiosity in the youth movement. There is something growing out of that youth movement, something liberal Christianity at large cannot do without.”<sup>187</sup> The future of the

<sup>184</sup> E.g.: A.C. Schade van Westrum, ‘Kerkelijk leven – De student en de kerk’, *Ibid.* 1918-40 (5 October 1918), 159; H.W., ‘Jeugdkerken’, *Ibid.* 1926-29 (17 July 1926), 226-227; 1926-32 (7 August 1926), 252. Separate religious services for youngsters have been organised, but not for ‘cultured’ people. Religious services organised for distinct classes were probably seen as conflicting with both the Christian ideal of brotherhood and the modernist idea that the contact between ‘less’ and ‘more’ developed people was particularly beneficial to the latter.

<sup>185</sup> J.A. de Koning, ‘De Amsterdamsche maatschappij voor jongemannen en nog wat’, *Ibid.* 1925-10 (7 March 1925), 76; De Koning, *De jeugdbeweging*, 14.

<sup>186</sup> Exemplary in this respect are: E.D. Spelberg, ‘Jong modernisme’, in: *Vrijzinnig Christelijke Jongerenbond – Jong modernisme* (s.l. [1923]), 3-11, there 9-11; J.M. van Veen, ‘Grepes uit de geschiedenis van de V.C.J.C.’, in: *V.C.J.C. – Vrijz. Chr. Studentenbond, Rijzende Kerk, Vrijz. Chr. Jeugdwerk, Vrijz. Chr. Jongerenbond* (s.l. [1939]), 6-10, there 6. Some, however, blamed the youngsters in the VCSB and the VCJB for manifesting themselves with a certain impetuosity, for looking down upon elder modernists, for being overconfident, for blowing their own trumpet or for being one-sidedly oriented on right-wing modernism and socialism. E.g.: J.A. de Koning, ‘De beoordeeling van de jeugdbeweging door buitenstaanders’, *De Hervorming* 1925-04 (24 January 1925), 27-28; [A.E.F. Junod], ‘Redactioneel – Jeugd, ontwapening en nog wat’, *Ibid.* 1925-05 (31 January 1925), 33-34; 1925-06 (7 February 1925), 42-43; H. Baart de la Faille, ‘Nog eens: de jeugdbeweging’, *Ibid.* 1925-08 (21 February 1925), 59-60; Tjalsma, ‘De Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond’, 32.

<sup>187</sup> “...die voor het cultuurleven van ons volk of zelfs maar voor de vrijzinnige richting alleen van doorslaande betekenis is.”; “...het beste, wat we hebben...”; “...de mijnheer, die praat en het gehoor dat luistert...”; “...in onze jeugdbeweging zit een groot stuk zeer levende, oprechte vrijzinnige geloofigheid, persoonlijk en soms ook gemeenschappelijk echt en doorstreden.” Quoted from: K.H. Roessingh, ‘Jeugdbeweging en vrijzinnigheid’, *De Hervorming* 1925-04 (24 January 1925), 26-27, there 26.

modernist movement as such, others claimed while echoing Roessingh, depended on the VCSB, the VCJB, the *Rijzende Kerk* and the VCJGB.<sup>188</sup>

### 9. Case III: The Liberal Protestant Radio Broadcasting Corporation VPRO

A spiritual battle was not only raging in youth life, but also on the airwaves. Once technology was advanced enough to turn it into a mass medium, the radio in the Netherlands did not merely come to be organised along ideological lines, it even became the very symbol of pillarised social life.<sup>189</sup> On 6 November 1919, engineer H.H. Schotanus à Steringa Idzerda (1885-1944) was the first to make a radio broadcast in the Netherlands and even in Europe. He remained the only Dutch broadcaster for a general audience until 21 July 1923, when the Hilversum-based *Nederlandsche Seintoestellenfabriek* (Dutch Transmitter Factory or NSF) started to regularly broadcast through a transmitting station of its own. As its broadcasts proved to be a success and began to take up so much time that they could no longer be combined with its actual business – the *production* of transmitters –, the NSF decided to organise its broadcasting activities under the banner of the ‘*Hilversumsche Draadloze Omroep*’ (‘the Hilversum Wireless’ or HDO) as of 1 April 1924. In order to develop into and gain government recognition as the national broadcasting organisation in the Netherlands, at which its administrators aimed, the HDO held on to the principle of neutrality and accordingly wanted to broadcast “with no preference for any religious or political conviction and with the intention to keep away from anything that could offend [any religious or denominational minority].”<sup>190</sup>

Although it had created and never fully privatised the HDO, the NSF was willing to let out its transmitting facilities to third parties, in the hope that this would stimulate the sale of transmitters and hence increase its earnings. Some orthodox Protestants, nearly all of whom were members of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, did not allow this opportunity to pass. Feeling that a ‘neutral’ broadcaster could never satisfy orthodox Protestant interests and needs, and in fact favoured liberalism – identifying ‘neutral’ with ‘liberal’ was a common method for confessionalists to demand the right, and to mobilise their co-religionists, to organise

<sup>188</sup> *Vrijzinnig Christelijke Jeugdbeweging – V.C.S.B., V.C.J.B.* (s.l. [±1925]), 7; E.D. Spelberg et al., ‘Jeugddag 1926’, *De Hervorming* 1926-02 (9 January 1926), 10; ‘Ons jeugdwerk’, *Ibid.* 1930-04 (8 April 1930), 31-32, there 31; D. Drijver, ‘Binnenland – Jeugdbeweging’, *Ibid.* 1932-05 (15 May 1932), 35-36; ‘Boekbespreking – “Jaarboekje voor 1933 van de Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond”’, *Ibid.* 1933-03 (24 March 1933), 23; T.A. Bergstra, ‘Onze balans’, in: *Lustrumboek. 5<sup>e</sup> lustrum Vrijzinnig Christelijke Studentenbond* (s.l. [1940]), 88-94.

<sup>189</sup> It can even be argued that the pillarisation paradigm as such is primarily based on a projection of the broadcasting situation – one orthodox Protestant, one Roman Catholic, one social democratic and one neutral broadcasting organisation, flanked by a tiny liberal Protestant one – onto Dutch society as a whole. Together with the press, the field of the radio was the only segment of social life in which orthodox Protestants, Roman Catholics, social democrats and neutrality-favouring liberals all had an organisation of their own. The term ‘orthodox Protestant’ is moreover misleading, as most organisations targeting an orthodox Protestant audience were dominated by neo-Calvinists. Cf.: Van Dam, *Staat van verzuiling*.

<sup>190</sup> “...zonder voorkeur van enige godsdienstige of politieke richting en met streven naar vermindering van al datgene wat andersdenkenden zou kunnen kwetsen.” Quoted in: H.P.M.J. Van Pelt, *De omroep in revisie. Ontwikkeling van het radio- en televisiebestel in Nederland en België* (Leuven 1974), 22. See also: J. de Boer, *De plaats van de omroep in het openbare leven in Nederland tot 1940* (Leiden 1946), 16-20, 53-60; J.Th.M. Bank, ‘Een halve eeuw omroephistorie in hoofdlijnen’, in: W. Huygen (ed.), *AVRO 50. Historie en perspectieven* (Hilversum 1973), 9-48, there 12-15; H.B.M. Wijffjes, ‘De ballade van de bolhoed. Willem Vogt en het débâcle van de nationale omroep (1923-1930)’, in: *Jaarboek Mediageschiedenis I* (Amsterdam 1989), 114-136, there 114.

themselves separately in all spheres of life<sup>191</sup> –, they wanted to prevent the ‘neutral’ HDO from monopolising the radio and founded the *Nederlandsche Christelijke Radio-Vereeniging* (Dutch Christian Radio Broadcasting Association or NCRV) on 15 November 1924. Notwithstanding the fear in orthodox Protestant circles that the radio might engross people just as much as sports and cinema, causing them to neglect their relationship with God, the founders of the NCRV contrariwise recognised the potential of the radio for spreading orthodox Protestant principles and for confirming orthodox Protestants in their outlook on life.<sup>192</sup> Inspired by a similar drive to thwart the ambition of the HDO, to propagandise and to counterbalance the dissemination of dissident views, the *Katholieke Radio-Omroep* (Catholic Radio Broadcasting Corporation or KRO) and the *Vereeniging van Arbeiders Radio-Amateurs* (Association of Workers’ Radio Amateurs or VARA) came into being in 1925.<sup>193</sup> With the NCRV, the KRO and the VARA now hiring broadcasting time from the NSF and presenting themselves as equal, ideology-based alternatives to the HDO, the government, which had so far not concerned itself with broadcasting, was forced to make permanent radio regulations in the late 1920s.

Liberal Protestants shared the ideal of one national broadcasting service with the HDO. By analogy with their ideal of one school for all Dutch children, they envisioned a broadcasting corporation in which all religious minorities in the Netherlands were given the opportunity to express themselves and to get into contact with each other. This, it was hoped, would lead to more respect among those minorities. Some modernists argued that it was absolutely necessary to follow the example of orthodox Protestants, Roman Catholics and social democrats by establishing a separate liberal Protestant radio organisation. If a national broadcasting service were indeed ever to come into being, then this organisation would make sure that liberal Protestants were involved in it. And if such a service would not come into being, then this organisation would at least enable liberal Protestants to make themselves heard on the radio, just as their confessionalist adversaries could do through the KRO and the NCRV. The feeling that there simply was no choice not to constitute a modernist broadcasting association led the Central Committee for Liberal Protestantism to convert its subcommittee for broadcasting affairs, which was exploring possibilities to air modernist religious services since 24 May 1924, into the independent, membership-based *Vrijzinnig-Protestantsche Radio-Omroep* on 29 May 1926. Contrary to the other broadcasting organisations, the VPRO did not want to include anything but religious services and lectures with a religious or cultural intent into its programming.<sup>194</sup> Due to a strong lobby of the NCRV, the KRO and the VARA, the all-confessionalist government

<sup>191</sup> J.H.J. van den Heuvel, *Nationaal of verzuimd? De strijd om het Nederlandse omroepbestel in de periode 1923-1947* (Baarn 1976), 13-14.

<sup>192</sup> P. Bak, “Niets te vroeg, maar gelukkig nog niet te laat”, in: P. Bak and W.J. Berkelaar, *Verkondiging en verstrooiing. Een geschiedenis van de NCRV 1924-2014* (Amsterdam 2014), 8-35, there 26-30; P. Bak, ‘Wie niet voor Mij is...’, in: *Ibid.*, 36-63, there 40-47.

<sup>193</sup> A.F. Manning, *Zestig jaar KRO. Uit de geschiedenis van een omroep* (Baarn 1985), 23-49; H.B.M. Wijfjes, *VARA. Biografie van een omroep* (Amsterdam 2009), 24-65.

<sup>194</sup> N.A. Bruining, ‘De Vrijzinnig Protestantsche Radio Omroep’, in: *Ons geloofsbezit. Propaganda-uitzending V.P.R.O. 24 februari 1928* (Huis ter Heide [1928]), 3-5; N.A. Bruining, *De beïnvloeding van ons volk door den V.P.R.O. Voordracht, gehouden ter algemeene vergadering van de Vereeniging van Vrijz. Hervormden op 13 juni 1935 te Middelburg* (s.l. [1935]), 6-8; E.D. Spelberg, *Hier Hilversum, de V.P.R.O.!* (s.l. [1961]), 9-12; J. Haasbroek, A.A. Kooyman and J. Rogier, ‘Het einde van de verloederings’, in: A.A. Kooyman and M. van Rooy (eds.), *De potentie van een dwerg. Een halve eeuw VPRO, van Spelberg tot Servet* (Amsterdam 1976), 11-43, there 13-17; Blom, “Het geloof van de radio op vrijdagavond”, 88-91.

decided in 1930 not to install a national broadcasting service, but to divide the available broadcasting time as follows: the HDO, now called ‘*Algemeene Vereeniging Radio-Omroep*’ (‘General Radio Broadcasting Association’ or AVRO),<sup>195</sup> the NCRV, the KRO and the VARA each received a share of twenty per cent, while the remaining twenty per cent was reserved for ‘general’ programming, produced by these four in rotation, and for the number of smaller radio associations that had come into being after 1925, including the VPRO.<sup>196</sup>

The distribution of broadcasting time caused outrage and fury at the side of the AVRO. The latter had been given the same share as the KRO, the NCRV and the VARA, implying that it was thought to represent a fourth segment of the population next to Roman Catholics, orthodox Protestants and social democrats. According to those three groups, it did indeed: the AVRO was the broadcaster for and of political liberals. This was true in practice, but not intentionally: it was only because those other three groups preferred broadcasting organisations of their own and no political parties but liberal ones were against a compartmentalisation of the radio along ideological lines, that the neutral AVRO received unanimous support from those with a politically liberal persuasion. After 1930, the AVRO itself still felt that it represented the Dutch population as a whole: attuning its programming to a general audience and not being based on any religious or political principles, it was the only truly national broadcaster and thus felt that it deserved the most broadcasting time.<sup>197</sup> In VPRO circles, the ideal of one national broadcasting service, modelled after the British Broadcasting Corporation, continued to be cherished as well.<sup>198</sup> Yet, the feeling that the founding of the VPRO had not been unnecessary intensified in the 1930s. The neutrality of the self-proclaimed ‘national’ AVRO proved to be mainly a negative one: instead of appreciating the various manifestations of religious faith in national life, the AVRO ignored them most of the time. In the spare instances in which it did find a slot for religion in its programming, it moreover fully identified religion with *orthodox* religion. To secure the support of (moderately) orthodox members of the Dutch Reformed Church, of whom many lamented the ongoing process of pillarisation and denounced the neo-Calvinist dominance in the NCRV, the AVRO invited *ethische* and *confessionele* Reformed ministers to give homiletic morning talks under its flag. Liberal Protestant ministers, on the other hand, were not allowed to do so, because, as the AVRO management reasoned, modernists did not take offence at orthodox sermons, but orthodox

<sup>195</sup> The HDO became an autonomous organisation, fully disentangled from the NSF, on 1 March 1926. To accentuate its new status and to reinforce its ambition to be the national broadcasting organisation, it changed its name into ‘*Algemeene Nederlandsche Radio-Omroep*’ (‘General Dutch Radio Broadcasting Corporation’ or ANRO) on 1 June 1927. Regarding the issuing of its programme guide, the ANRO decided to no longer make use of the services of publishing house Jacob van Campen, which had issued the programme guide of the HDO. This publishing house, feeling ill-treated by the ANRO, and a group of politically liberal businessmen and liberal politicians, who wanted to counteract the socialist propaganda of the VARA, took the initiative to establish the *Nederlandsche Omroep-Vereeniging* (Dutch Broadcasting Association or NOV) shortly before the name change of the HDO came into effect. The NOV was not intentionally liberal – although the NCRV and the KRO, seeing it as an ally against the ANRO, welcomed it as such –, but presented itself as a ‘neutral’ rival to the similarly ‘neutral’ ANRO. Pressured by the government and more or less forced due to the opening of a second broadcasting installation of the NSF, which was entirely at the disposal of the NCRV and the KRO and consequently strengthened the position of those broadcasting organisations, the ANRO and the NOV merged into the AVRO on 28 December 1927. See: De Boer, *De plaats van de omroep*, 76-78; Wijffjes, ‘De ballade van de bolhoed’, 120-125.

<sup>196</sup> Van den Heuvel, *Nationaal of verzuild?*, 33-42.

<sup>197</sup> ‘Algemeenheid in den aether’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* CIV.33932 (5 August 1931), 1; ‘De radiostrijd. A.V.R.O. nationaal?’, *De Tijd* LXXXVIII.26721 (30 December 1932), 1.

<sup>198</sup> Until well into the 1960s. See: *Een nationale omroep?* (s.l. 1960), 18. In 1968, the VPRO lost its liberal Protestant identity and became the mouthpiece of the baby boom generation.

would certainly be annoyed at modernist ones. In the last case, the AVRO would no longer stick to its principle of not offending anyone. The AVRO, VPRO sympathisers felt, interpreted ‘neutrality’ in such a way that it left no room for liberal Protestant voices and could hence not rightfully claim to be the national Dutch broadcaster.<sup>199</sup>

## 10. The Modernist Movement and the Process of Pillarisation: An Evaluation

The first generation of modernists favoured politics based on liberal principles and an organisation of society based on the principle of neutrality. The majority of later generations continued to do so. Yet, dissatisfaction with liberal politics and neutrality-based schools and other voluntary associations increased over time. In the modernist opinion press, a growing number of articles came to be published in which liberal political parties, neutral public schools and neutrality-based ‘*algemene*’ (‘general’) associations were blamed for being permeated with a spirit of religious indifference. Although modernists generally preferred to increase their influence *within* those parties, schools and associations, separate modernist organisations were created in some segments of social life, predominantly in the 1910s, 1920s and 1930s.

These organisations only came into being – and this is a crucial point – when it began to dawn upon modernists that, due to the religious indifference prevailing in political liberalism and in the neutral voluntary sector, orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics, who had started to separately organise themselves in all spheres of life in the late nineteenth century, had managed to nearly monopolise religion as a political and social force and to enhance their influence in politics and society. The rise of right-wing modernism and the ‘ecclesial turn’ nourished this awareness. Both of these processes caused modernists to reflect upon the nature of their movement, stimulating them to identify themselves as liberal *Christians* instead of as *religious* liberals. Both of these processes, in combination with the process of pillarisation, intensified modernists’ sense of urgency in no longer allowing confessionalists to lay an exclusive claim to the adjective ‘Christian’<sup>200</sup> as well as their sense of having specific ‘principles’ that could not automatically be materialised in existing non-faith-based organisations. In order to propagate those principles more explicitly and to counteract the further social marginalisation of the modernist movement, modernists generally acknowledged that they should make themselves better heard. Some of them believed that there was no choice other than to follow confessionalists’ example and urged their fellow modernists to organise themselves separately.

<sup>199</sup> D. Drijver, ‘Binnenland’, *De Hervorming* 1930-06 (13 June 1930), 42; ‘De V.P.R.O. en de A.V.R.O.’, *Het Vaderland* (7 July 1930), evening paper A, 2; ‘De zendtijdwijziging van den V.P.R.O. en de A.V.R.O.’, *Ibid.* (6 November 1936), evening paper D, 2; F.C.M. Boenders, ‘De AVRO-dominee’, *Onze Wachter* V.2 (24 February 1939), 2. In turn, the AVRO accused the VPRO of being an ‘appendage’ to the VARA. The VPRO gave some of its broadcasting time in the evening to the VARA, which in turn gave the VPRO some of its broadcasting time in the morning. The VPRO was thus enabled to broadcast sermon-like talks in the morning, but gave a popular timeslot in the evening to the VARA. See: ‘A.V.R.O. en V.P.R.O.’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* CIII.33542 (8 July 1930), morning paper, 5; ‘De zendtijdwijziging van den V.P.R.O. en de A.V.R.O.’, *Het Vaderland* (6 November 1936), evening paper D, 2. Some liberal Protestants made a similar complaint: they accused the VPRO of giving more broadcasting time to preachers with a socialist persuasion than to those with a liberal one. E.g.: ‘Ingezonden – Vrijzinnig Protestantsche Radio Omroep’, *De Hervorming* 1929-03 (2 March 1929), 20; J. Luchies, “‘De V.P.R.O. een baken in zee’”, *Onze Wachter* III.6 (29 June 1935), 3.

<sup>200</sup> Exemplary in this respect is: F. Dijkema, ‘In den stroom – De V.P.R.O.’, *De Stroom* IX.25 (24 May 1930), 3.

The institutionalisation of liberal Protestantism that was the result thereof culminated in the founding of the VPRO, “a uniting factor between [all liberal Protestant] groups,”<sup>201</sup> in 1926, and the purchase of a building at the Nieuwegracht 27 in Utrecht, in which the secretariats of the CC, the NPB, the VPRO, the Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women, the various youth organisations, a modernist press agency and later also the VVH and the Remonstrant Brotherhood came to be housed, in 1931. In the words of Remonstrant theologian Th.M. van Leeuwen, this building symbolised “the dream of a liberal Protestant pillar.”<sup>202</sup> This dream was particularly strong among VPRO executives. One of them, N.A. Bruining (1886-1963), even expressed the hope that the VPRO would become the mouthpiece of a fully expanded fifth pillar, next to the pillars already represented by the NCRV, the KRO, the VARA and the AVRO.<sup>203</sup> (Bruining apparently considered the AVRO to represent a genuine pillar as well.<sup>204</sup>) The creation of separate organisations had started reluctantly,<sup>205</sup> but was here enthusiastically recommended. Was this enthusiasm not rather out of place? Was the founding of separate modernist organisations not an admission of weakness, an admission that the modernist movement had definitely failed and acknowledged the superiority of confessionality? This question had already been raised in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* in 1918. Reflecting upon the initiatives that modernists took to reach “the vulgar herd,” an anonymous reporter, who showed sympathy with the modernist movement, noticed with regret that whenever modernists tried to exert more influence in social life, “they are driven back on the old-fashioned means of propaganda of the [confessionalist] adversaries over and over again.” If, he cynically added, their religious life indeed had “a distinct character,” why did modernists then fail to invent unorthodox methods to propagate their principles?<sup>206</sup> Because, A.H. van der Hoeve responded, there was no better way to permeate society with those principles than to imitate orthodoxy. He had no difficulty in admitting that the VCSB was nothing more than a modernist copy of the NCSV and that modernist open-air meetings were modelled after orthodox mission festivals. After all, orthodoxy “is much older than modernism and hence has much more experience [in making itself heard].” With orthodoxy now setting the tone in society, Van der Hoeve implied, mimicking it at least to a certain extent was necessary to being heard.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>201</sup> “...een samenbindende factor tussen [de vrijzinnig-protestantse] groeperingen...” Quoted from: Th.M. van Leeuwen, ‘Woord vooraf’, in: Boer et al. (eds.), *Het jonge hart*, 9-11, there 9. Van Diggelen even calls the VPRO the very ‘centre’ of Dutch liberal Protestantism. See: M.J. van Diggelen, ‘Nicolette Adriana Bruining (1886-1963). Een pionier in dienst van de vrijzinnigheid’, in: De Baar et al. (eds.), *Honderd jaar vrouwen op de kansel, 1911-2011*, 93-100, there 98.

<sup>202</sup> Van Leeuwen, ‘Nieuwegracht 27: de droom van een vrijzinnige zuil’, 167-178.

<sup>203</sup> Blom, “‘Het geloof van de radio op vrijdagavond’”, 84.

<sup>204</sup> As she made clear in 1937, she indeed did. Bruining justified the founding of liberal Protestant organisations by stating that the interests of only four groups – Roman Catholics, orthodox Protestants, social democrats and ‘neutrals’ – were reckoned with in social life, and that liberal Protestants belonged to none of these groups. See: Bruining, ‘De Centrale Commissie en de kerkelijke groepen’, 11.

<sup>205</sup> In this respect, Molendijk coins the term “willy-nilly pillarisation” (“*verzuiling tegen wil en dank*”). See: Molendijk, ‘De vervluchting van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland’, 128.

<sup>206</sup> “...dat de vrijzinnig-godsdiensstigen, zoodra zij het ‘vulgas’ gaan bewerken, steeds weer hun toevlucht moeten nemen tot de afgesleten propaganda-middelen der tegenpartij.”; “...een zelfstandig karakter...” Quoted from: ‘Kerknieuws – De Nederlandsche Protestantenvond’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXV.286 (15 October 1918), evening paper A, 1.

<sup>207</sup> “...de rechtzinnigheid [...], die zooveel ouder is dan de vrijzinnigheid en dus over zooveel meer ervaring beschikt[.]” Quoted from: A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – Tentzending’, *De Hervorming* 1918-47 (23 November 1918), 187. Having been discussed in *De Hervorming* exactly ten years before, modernist open-air meetings were

A genuine liberal Protestant pillar never did come into being. The organisations based on modernist principles were too few in number to refer them to as a ‘*zuil*’. Moreover, only one of the three motives historians and sociologists consider to be at the bottom of the process of pillarisation played a role in the founding of modernist organisations. The emancipatory motive to gain more political power, or to leave behind a socially and culturally backward position, did not apply to modernists: they were anything but socially and culturally backward, while they did not have to ‘gain’ access to the political arena. The protectionist motive to ward off external influences was absent as well, for modernists were highly receptive to what was going on outside of their own circles. Only the apologetic or propagandistic motive to make themselves heard was a stimulus for (some) modernists to organise themselves separately.<sup>208</sup> Modernists also lacked a political party of their own, which was one of the constitutive elements of a ‘*zuil*’.<sup>209</sup> A key feature of ‘pillars’ was that they ran vertically through society, meaning that the organisations of which they consisted enjoyed significant support from people of all social classes.<sup>210</sup> Being rooted in the rather bourgeoisie-centred modernist movement, liberal Protestant organisations probably did not have a membership in which all social classes were relatively equally represented, at least not to the same extent as Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant ones.<sup>211</sup> For all of these reasons, it is incorrect to distinguish a liberal Protestant ‘pillar’ in the interwar period – at most, the vague contours of a ‘pillaret’, a small, very incomplete network of modernist organisations, became visible in the 1920s.

It is striking, yet, as explained in chapter 6, perfectly understandable, that the founding of nearly all of the organisations on modernist principles was initiated and effectuated by theologians and preachers. Once founded, the latter continued to lead those organisations. Modernist organisations were thus not only modelled after orthodox ones, they were also characterised by the *dominocratie* (the leadership and dominance of ministers) that modernists claimed to dislike in orthodoxy. In fact, while no theologian belonged to the first leading men of the NCRV, for example, the first management of the VPRO solely consisted of theologians:

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organised in 1909 for the first time. Several were held afterwards, particularly in Friesland and Groningen. The goal of these meetings was to strengthen modernists in their faith, and to propagate liberal Protestantism among people who would never attend a religious service in a liberal Protestant congregation. After 1917, the interest in open-air meetings started to wane in modernist circles: it turned out that these meetings failed to reach non-modernists. See: P.K., ‘Openlucht-bijeenkomsten’, *Ibid.* 1911-15 (15 April 1911), 114-115; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Onze openlucht-samenkomsten’, *Ibid.* 1912-21 (25 May 1912), 163-164; Hooykaas, *Gemeenteleven*, 5, 23. Noordhoff erroneously states that the first meeting was held in 1910. See: Noordhoff, *Het godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven*, 29-30.

<sup>208</sup> Hendriks, *De emancipatie van de gereformeerden*; J.M.G. Thurlings, *De wankele zuil. Nederlandse katholieken tussen assimilatie en pluralisme* (Nijmegen 1971), 18-34; Stuurman, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriarchaat*, 72-75; Righart, *De katholieke zuil in Europa*, 29-32; P.J.M. Pennings, *Verzuiling en ontzuiling: de lokale verschillen. Opbouw, instandhouding en neergang van de plaatselijke zuilen in de verschillende delen van Nederland na 1880* (Kampen 1991), 2-20; Groot, *Roomsen, rechtzinnigen en nieuwlichters*, 16-18; H. de Liagre Böhl, ‘Hoofddlijnen in de politieke ontwikkeling van het moderne Nederland’, in: Becker (ed.), *Maatschappij en Nederlandse politiek*, 205-233, there 214-215.

<sup>209</sup> Stuurman, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriarchaat*, 71; Hellemans, *Strijd om de moderniteit*, 24-25.

<sup>210</sup> M. Duijvendak and P. Kooij, *Sociale geschiedenis. Theorie en thema's* (Assen 1992), 75.

<sup>211</sup> For the same reason, it can be questioned whether genuine socialist and neutral/liberal ‘pillars’ have indeed ever existed: working-class people and the bourgeoisie respectively were overrepresented in the membership of socialist and neutral organisations. Lijphart distinguishes a third ‘pillar’ next to a Roman Catholic and an orthodox Protestant one. He calls this third pillar the ‘neutral’ one, consisting of both a social democratic and a liberal component. See: Lijphart, *Verzuiling, pacificatie en kentering in de Nederlandse politiek*, 28, 34. See also: Stuurman, *Verzuiling, kapitalisme en patriarchaat*, 67-69; Pennings, *Verzuiling en ontzuiling*, 21-24.



N.A. Bruining and the Dutch Reformed ministers J.P. de Graaff (1883-1965) and E.D. Spelberg (1898-1968).<sup>212</sup> The founding of the VPRO is exemplary for the evolution of the modernist movement as a social force: instead of leading the way, modernists eventually *followed* trends in society and culture. They not only failed to develop new forms of worship or even at the very least to reform church life, but also to be the vanguard in social life that they wanted to be.<sup>213</sup>

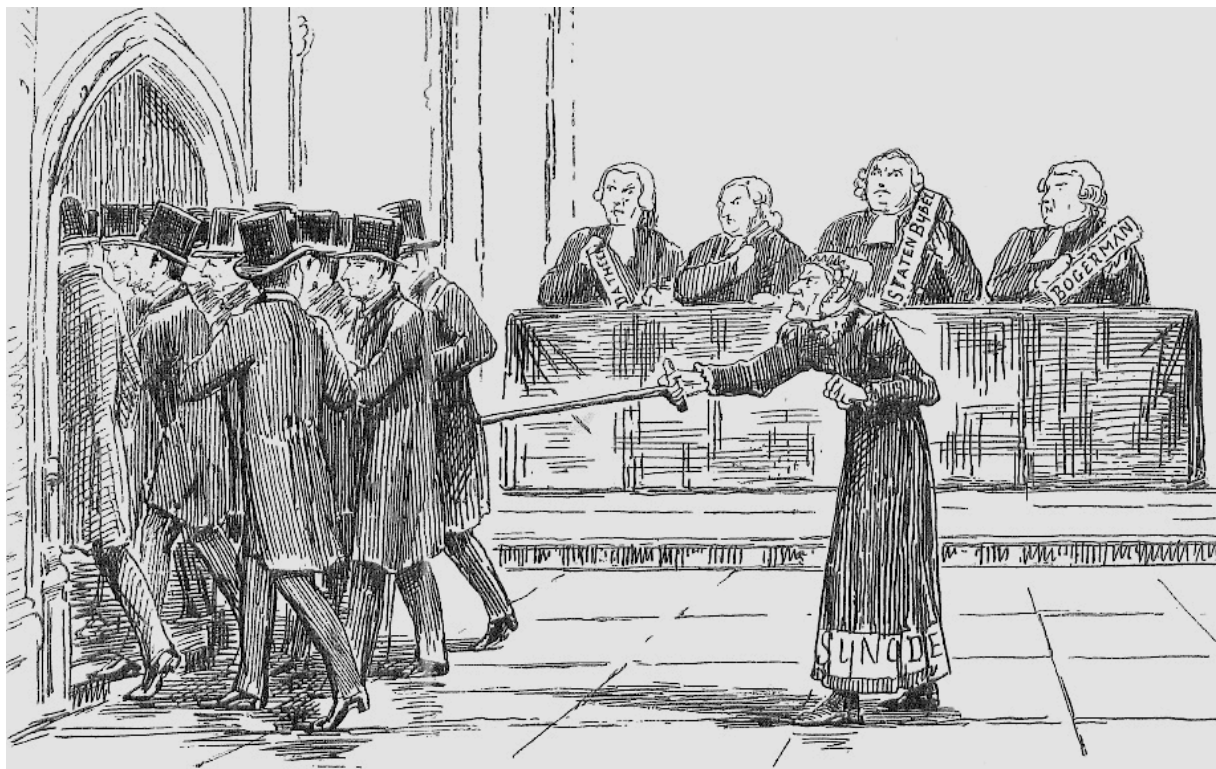
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<sup>212</sup> Van Pelt, *De omroep in revisie*, 39. In its first years, the NCRV was basically led by lawyer A. van der Deure (1889-1957), entrepreneur D. Pereboom (1888-1974), publisher C.A. Keuning (1890-1961) and technician P.C. Tolk (1890-1968). All of them belonged to the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, except Tolk, who was a member of the Dutch Reformed Church. He would, however, join the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in 1929. See: Bak, 'Wie niet voor Mij is...', 43-45, 58.

<sup>213</sup> Or, as C.E. Hooykaas phrased it, "religious liberals have drifted away from the centre of social and political life" (*"de verwijdering van de vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen uit het centrum van sociaal en politiek leven"*). Quoted from: C.E. Hooykaas, 'Maatschappelijk leven – Christelijk humanisme in staat en maatschappij', *De Stroom* II.27 (16 June 1923), 2.

# **PART V**

## The International Context



Dutch modernists (*left*) were confronted with orthodox attempts to purge church life of their influence, such as in the Dutch Reformed synod in 1876. Their liberal Protestant co-religionists abroad shared their lot.

*Source:* 'De verdraagzaamheid in het jaar onzes Heeren 1876', *Uilenspiegel* VII.41 (30 September 1876), 164.

## 10. FIELDS RIPE FOR HARVEST?

### 1. “A Difficult Combination”

As indicated in the previous chapters, orthodox Protestantism fulfilled the role of what sociology calls a ‘significant other’, in comparison to and distinction from which the identity and development of the modernist movement took shape. For example, as analysed in the last chapter, initiatives to found separate modernist organisations were taken after the example of orthodoxy and motivated by the perception that modernists’ position in society was marginalising due to orthodoxy’s bigger concentration of power. Orthodoxy not only displayed a larger force in Dutch society, but also in the Dutch East Indies – both in ‘European’, ‘colonial’ life and in the field of foreign mission. While engaging in missionary activities among indigenous Indonesians was seen as something obvious in orthodox circles, liberal Reformed minister C.B. Burger (1897-1983) noticed in 1925 that, by contrast, modernism and foreign mission had been “a difficult combination” ever since the emergence of the modernist movement.<sup>1</sup> In the mid-nineteenth century, Burger explained, involvement of modernists in foreign mission had been perceived as problematic among orthodox Protestants. A significant amount of the latter had felt that the only Dutch missionary society existing at the time, the predominantly Dutch Reformed *Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap* (Dutch Missionary Society or NZG), did not distance itself explicitly enough from the emerging modern theology, leading to the creation of several orthodox alternative missionary societies in the late 1850s.<sup>2</sup> Afterwards, however, the involvement of modernists in foreign mission had become problematic among modernists themselves, as a result of which the support for missionary activities diminished in their ranks.<sup>3</sup> Why was this the case? Why was foreign mission such a controversial issue in the modernist movement?

Because a handful of modernists, most of whom related to the NZG in one way or another, eagerly tried to take away co-religionists’ objections to involvement with missionary activities, foreign mission was a recurring issue throughout the entire period in which *De Hervorming* was published. The arguments that both they and their opponents put forward are analysed in this chapter.

### 2. Foreign Mission as a ‘Problem’

Foreign mission has to be discerned from two other forms of ‘mission’:<sup>4</sup> home mission and evangelisation. Home mission includes all domestic social welfare activities motivated by Christian humanitarianism to help the poor and needy and intended to make the name of Jesus known among them. As is clear from chapters 6 and 7, such activities were controversial in

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<sup>1</sup> “*Steeds heeft er in de combinatie van vrijzinnigheid en zending een moeilijkheid gelegen.*” Quoted from: [C.B. Burger in:] ‘Geestelijk leven – De vrijzinnigen en de zending’, *De Telegraaf* XXXIII.12493 (8 July 1925), 12.

<sup>2</sup> A separate Dutch Mennonite missionary society had already come into being in 1847. The NZG had no formal ties to the Dutch Reformed Church. See: J.A.B. Jongeneel, *Nederlandse zendingsgeschiedenis. Ontmoeting van protestantse christenen met andere godsdiensten en geloven (1601-1917)* (Zoetermeer 2015), 155-156, 158-159.

<sup>3</sup> [C.B. Burger in:] ‘Geestelijk leven – De vrijzinnigen en de zending’, *De Telegraaf* XXXIII.12493 (8 July 1925), 12.

<sup>4</sup> John 4:35 is often interpreted as an exhortation to conduct foreign mission: “Behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest.” A Samaritan woman to whom Jesus talked, mentioned in John 4, could be seen as an early missionary. E.g.: J.R. Donahue, ‘Who is My Enemy? The Parable of the Good Samaritan and the Love of Enemies’, in: W.M. Swartley (ed.), *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (Louisville 1992), 137-156, there 149; A.J. Köstenberger, *John: The Gospel in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids [1999] 2005), esp. 88.

modernist circles: modernists wanted to assist the poor and needy, but felt that welfare work should *only* be conducted out of philanthropic motivations, not with the ulterior motive to ‘proselytise’. Social work should contribute to strengthening people’s inner lives by bringing them into contact with high-principled ‘spiritual aristocrats’ – whose religious spirit was believed to ‘instil’ into the minds of the destitute in due course –, not by explicitly preaching a religious message to them. To avoid the risk that it might be done to make ‘converts’ for the modernist movement, social work was therefore ultimately not integrated in the framework of the national NPB. While an attempt to ‘Christianise’ people is made in word and deed combined in home mission, evangelisation is restricted to spreading Christianity in word: it intends to lead apostates back to Christianity or to revive the faith of those who are Christians mostly in name.<sup>5</sup> Evangelisation was also problematic in modernist circles: modernists felt to have a word for the world, but did not want to tell people what to believe. Modernist sermons and brochures were accordingly intended to help individuals in internalising certain principles of life, on the basis of which they could form their own conceptions of God. At the 1888 NPB assembly, F.W.B. van Bell formulated what ‘evangelisation’ – a term modernists did not use themselves – should consist of:

We want to show in ourselves the harmony between our religious life and the wealth of human development, and to work [to establish this harmony in others] – not by violently turning others into modernists, but by commending ourselves by being who we are and what we do; not by imposing our beliefs upon others, but by the written and the spoken word. We derive our strength and our hope for achieving our goals from the conviction that we, by so doing, actualise the human predisposition [to believe in God].<sup>6</sup>

Words of identical meaning could be frequently heard in modernist circles. In 1891, for example, modernist-minded schoolteacher C.F.A. Zernike (1859-1922) wrote that modernists should only ‘preach’ their principles to others by practising those principles rather than by making propaganda.<sup>7</sup> Modernists did not want to breed proselytes, but, to refer to a speech A.W. van Wijk gave in 1900, they only wanted to raise spiritual consciousness, “to cultivate and generate religious life,” regardless of the conceptions in which this religious life came to be clothed.<sup>8</sup>

Contrary to home mission and evangelisation, foreign mission does not take place in a Christian context: it intends to spread Christianity among people living in parts of the world

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<sup>5</sup> In Dutch, ‘evangelisation’ is called ‘*evangelisatie*’, ‘home mission’ is denoted as ‘*inwendige zending*’, and foreign mission’ is usually simply called ‘*zending*’. The usage of the term ‘*uitwendige zending*’ to refer to the latter is nowadays rather archaic. Hoekstra regards ‘home mission’ and ‘evangelisation’ to be synonyms. See: E.G. Hoekstra, *Christendom* (Kampen [2003] 2006), 235. However, unlike evangelisation, home mission is by definition coupled with social work. Foreign mission usually has a social, humanitarian aspect to it as well: alongside preaching, it often includes the building of hospitals and schools.

<sup>6</sup> “*Niet door anderen met geweld modern te maken, maar ons zelven aanbevelende door wat wij zijn en doen; zonder iemand iets op te dringen, maar door woord en schrift willen wij in ons zelven te zien geven de verzoening tusschen ons religieus leven en den rijkdom der humanitaire ontwikkeling, en daaraan arbeiden voor anderen. Wij vinden onze kracht en de hoop voor ons welslagen in onze overtuiging, dat wij daarmee den menschelijken aanleg verwerklijken.*” Quoted from: [F.W.B. van Bell in:] ‘De 16<sup>e</sup> Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond’, *De Hervorming* 1888-44 (3 November 1888), 174.

<sup>7</sup> C.F.A. Zernike, “‘De Hervorming’ in debat”, *Ibid.* 1891-06 (7 February 1891), 21-22, there 22. [The author was erroneously referred to as ‘F.A. Zernike’.]

<sup>8</sup> “*...godsdienslig leven te wekken en te kweeken.*” Quoted from: A.W. van Wijk, ‘Wat is de beste wijze om onze beïngselen tot het volk te brengen?’, *Ibid.* 1900-45 (10 November 1900), 345-346, there 346.

where Christianity is absent, or at least not the dominant religion. Of course, ‘Christianity’ meant something different in modernist circles than in orthodoxy: while in orthodoxy it centred on the notion that Jesus Christ saves souls from eternal damnation, among modernists Christianity was about the principles of life expressed in the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth. Conducting foreign mission accordingly was problematic among the latter. If it was not necessary for people to accept Jesus as Christ, did it still make sense for modernists to engage in missionary activities?<sup>9</sup> If this question was answered in the affirmative, how should modernists give shape to foreign mission? They acknowledged that the biblical texts were meant to convey certain principles of life rather than to be accepted in their literal form. But were non-Christians intellectually capable of distinguishing between the contextual form and the actual content of those texts? If not, was introducing them to Christianity not then rather an infringement on a free development of religious life?<sup>10</sup> One could have a Protestant, and hence Christian, spirit without identifying as a Christian, indeed without having heard of Jesus. Should modernists not then have the confidence that religious life among ‘pagans’ would ultimately evolve in a ‘Christian’ direction?

Next to considerations such as these, there was another reason for foreign mission to be problematic in modernist circles. The discussion on foreign mission among modernists revolved around their involvement in the NZG. This missionary society, founded in 1797, was formally interdenominational, yet “linked in people’s minds, and in its membership to the Dutch Reformed Church.”<sup>11</sup> Before the 1940s, the Dutch Reformed Church did not concern itself with foreign mission directly; rather, its members were active in nondenominational missionary corporations.<sup>12</sup> When, in the nineteenth century, first the *Groninger* or *evangelische* movement and later the modernist movement emerged, orthodox Protestants became increasingly dissatisfied with the NZG: in their eyes, the missionary society did not distance itself enough from those movements. As a result, as of the 1850s, separate orthodox missionary societies were founded.<sup>13</sup> Modernists, on the other hand, got the feeling that the NZG was eager to receive their financial support, but did not allow them to play an active role in its activities.<sup>14</sup> During executive board elections, for example, modernists were passed over.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, there was reluctance among modernists

<sup>9</sup> Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 379.

<sup>10</sup> As Boone writes: “Many modernists [...] regarded foreign mission to be conflicting with the principle of individual freedom as well as with the tolerance and love that formed the quintessence of the Gospel.” (“*Veel modernen [...] achten zendingswerk in strijd met het principe van de vrijheid van het individu en de verdraagzaamheid en liefde die de kern van het evangelie waren.*”) Quoted from: A.Th. Boone, ‘Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885’, *Documentatieblad voor de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Zending en Overzeese Kerken* IV.2 (1997), 22-40, there 22. See also: G. de Leeuw, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Afblijven!’, *De Hervorming* 1910-45 (5 November 1910), 358; ‘Kerknieuws – Zending’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXVII.307 (5 November 1910), evening paper A, 1.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted from: R.S. Kipp, *The Early Years of a Dutch Colonial Mission. The Karo Field* (Ann Arbor 1990), 28.

<sup>12</sup> The Dutch Reformed Church coordinated missionary activities under its colours during the Second World War, establishing a permanent *Raad voor de Zending der Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (Mission Council of the Dutch Reformed Church) in 1951. See: J. van de Wal, *Een aanvechtbare en onzekere situatie. De Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk en Nieuw-Guinea 1949-1962* (Hilversum 2006), 43.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*; Th. van den End, *De Nederlandse Zendingsvereniging in West-Java, 1858-1963. Een bronnenpublicatie* (s.l. 1991), 3.

<sup>14</sup> [J.N. Wiersma in:] ‘Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenvereniging’, *De Hervorming* 1888-33 (18 August 1888), 130-131, there 130.

<sup>15</sup> J.N. Wiersma, ‘Binnenland – Waarom niet meer?’, *Ibid.* 1885-05 (31 January 1885), 18-19, there 19; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Eén onder zes-en-twintig’, *Ibid.* 1896-51 (19 December 1896), 203; A.F.H. Blaauw, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De toekomst van het Nederlandsche Zendinggenootschap’, *Ibid.* 1898-36 (3 September 1898), 145; Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], ‘Uit de kerkelijke wereld’, *Ibid.* 1902-25 (21 June 1902), 195-196; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Het Nederlandsch Zendinggenootschap’, *Ibid.* 1902-26 (28 June 1902), 203.

to support a society that favoured an interpretation of mission as an endeavour to make people believe in Jesus as Redeemer.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Discussing Foreign Mission

Foreign mission was therefore generally approached with ambivalence, indifference or even outright rejection in modernist circles. Nonetheless, it was a topic that was frequently brought up for discussion in the modernist press. There were modernists who passionately defended the cause of foreign mission. One of them was S. Hoekstra. At the first assembly of modernist theologians in Amsterdam, held in 1866, he lectured that foreign mission should be about “the propagation of truth and justice in a Christian spirit and based on liberal principles,” about spreading civilisation, cultural refinement and progress. Because of this, he believed that only modernists were fit to be missionaries. Moreover, Hoekstra thought, only liberal Protestantism truly satisfied humans’ deepest spiritual needs.<sup>17</sup> In the same year, N.C. Balsem, whose brother H.S. Balsem (1833-1903) was a minister in the Dutch East Indies at the time, tried to persuade fellow modernists of the necessity to conduct foreign mission, by lecturing about it in terms of the spread of civilisation as well: “we want to uplift the Asian, we want to develop his spiritual life, we want to establish schools, we want to purify his moral sense, enlighten his religious sense, in sum: we want to educate the Asian for God’s and humanity’s sake.”<sup>18</sup> Looking back upon his twelve-year stay as a missionary in the Indonesian Minahassa peninsula, J.N. Wiersma (1833-1907) put forward the same opinion ten years later.<sup>19</sup> When asked whether Protestants should try to convert ‘pagans’ to Christianity or to ‘humanise’ them, he resolutely answered: “both.”<sup>20</sup> This might seem as a contradiction of Hoekstra’s words, but it was actually an endorsement of what Hoekstra had said ten years before. After all, Wiersma did not see any difference between ‘Christianising’ and ‘civilising’, as “foreign mission is pedagogy, and everything conflicting with good morals has to be changed.”<sup>21</sup> A missionary should not set himself up as a “clergyman,” but rather as a “natural human being,” different from other human beings only to the extent that he should be “a paragon and an example, excelling in decency, devoutness, love and above all humility.”<sup>22</sup>

<sup>16</sup> [H.C. Lohr], ‘Het Nederlandsche Zendinggenootschap’, *Ibid.* 1876-15 (13 April 1876), 1-2; A.J.H.W. Brandt, ‘Zending’, *Ibid.* 1883-32 (11 August 1883), 126.

<sup>17</sup> “...het voortplanten van waarheid en gerechtigheid in christelijken geest en op breeden grondslag.” Quoted from: S. Hoekstra Bz., ‘De moderne richting en de zending’, *Nieuw en Oud I* (1866), 47-67, there 64. See also: Herderscheë, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 380; Boone, ‘Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885’, 23.

<sup>18</sup> “We willen den Aziaat opheffen, we willen zijn geestesleven ontwikkelen, we willen scholen oprichten, we willen zijn zedelijk bewustzijn zuiveren, zijn godsdienstig gevoel verhelderen, in één woord: we willen den Aziaat voor God en mensheid opvoeden.” Quoted from: N.C. Balsem, *Zoekende liefde. Een woord tot aanbeveling der zending, uitgesproken op de jaarvergadering der onderafdeeling Dragten, den 13 Mei 1866* (Leeuwarden 1866), 24. To quote Kalma, Balsem was “one of the few liberals who advocated foreign mission” (“Hij was een der weinige vrijzinnigen die voor de zending pleitten.” Quoted from: J.J. Kalma, ‘Balsem, Nicolaas Cornelis’, *BLGNP III*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> A review of this retrospective was published in: P. Cool, ‘Feuilleton – “Ervaringen gedurende mijn twaalfjarig zendingsleven”’, *De Hervorming* 1877-21 (26 May 1877), 1-2; 1877-22 (2 June 1877), 1-3. For Wiersma and the controversy his modernist persuasion caused within the NZG, see: A. Th. Boone, “In het belang van zedelijkheid en recht”. J.N. Wiersma (1833-1907) als modernistisch zendeling en hulpprediker te Ratahan (Minahassa)’, in: Th. van den End et al. (eds.), *Twee eeuwen Nederlandse zending, 1797-1997. Twaalf opstellen* (Zoetermeer 1997), 91-113.

<sup>20</sup> J.N. Wiersma, *Ervaringen gedurende mijn twaalfjarig zendingsleven* (Rotterdam 1876), 40.

<sup>21</sup> “Zending is paedagogie, en al wat strijdig is met goede zeden met worden veranderd.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 114. In Wiersma’s words, missionaries were “pioneers of civilisation” (“pioniers der beschaving”).

<sup>22</sup> “Intusschen meen ik niet dat de zendeling den geestelijke uit moet hangen, of voor dominé moet spelen. Hij zij een gewoon, natuurlijk mensch, net als alle andere menschen [...]. Alleen in zedelijkheid, in geloof en liefde moet hij uitmunten, daarin zij hij een toonbeeld en een voorbeeld; maar vooral in nederigheid.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 40.

Stories, not only biblical ones, were only there to support the moral superiority of values deemed Christian, values that should clearly shine through in the life of the missionary himself.<sup>23</sup>

In an anonymous piece of writing, published in *De Hervorming* on 13 April 1876, it was said that raising the level of civilisation of pagans was a precondition without which the principles of Jesus would never be able to take root.<sup>24</sup> Bringing non-Christian peoples into contact with Christianity could not even be done without civilising them, for those principles were ethical by nature. Spreading them thus automatically meant increasing the level of civilisation. What is more, as Lutheran theologian A.J.H.W. Brandt (1855-1915) implied in 1883, *only* Christianity could be truly uplifting.<sup>25</sup> That is to say, as a certain 'J.A.S.B.' explained in 1902, *liberal* Christianity. Whereas orthodox Christians were exclusively interested in the *Jenseits*, liberal Christians placed the *Diesseits* at the forefront, meaning that the former were preoccupied with 'saving souls' for the afterlife, while the latter wanted to improve the lives of 'pagans' in the here and now.<sup>26</sup> As becomes clear from all of these examples, liberal Christianity and civilisation were seen as two sides of the same coin: the one could not be separated from the other.<sup>27</sup>

At least among old-school modernists, this persuasion was firmly rooted in an outlook on human history in general and the history of religion in particular, as a linear, evolutionary process towards the ultimate fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. Human history showed that every era was an improvement of the era preceding it. The history of religion was read accordingly. Out of 'primitive' paganism, legalistic Judaism had developed, which, in turn, had given birth to ethically superior Christianity. In Western Christianity in the early modern period, Roman Catholicism had been surpassed by Protestantism, which rejected clerical hierarchy and the veneration of saints, but was still 'Roman' in the sense that it was highly dogmatic and did not question supernaturalism.<sup>28</sup> Ultimately, the contemporary era had brought modernism into being, shaking off this Roman 'leaven' in Protestantism. As said, both in the nineteenth and in the early twentieth century, there was a latent sentiment among modernists that a universal religion of mankind would ultimately (and could only) develop out of liberal Protestantism, a religion in which all humans would be spiritually united and would worship God as the omnipresent linking together all human beings as well as nature and mankind.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 42; Boone, 'Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885', 33.

<sup>24</sup> [H.C. Lohr], 'Het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap', *De Hervorming* 1876-15 (13 April 1876), 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> A.J.H.W. Brandt, 'Zending', *Ibid.* 1883-32 (11 August 1883), 126; 1883-33 (18 August 1883), 130.

<sup>26</sup> J.A.S.B., 'Ingezonden stukken', *Ibid.* 1902-02 (11 January 1902), 13-14; J.N. Wiersma, 'Ingezonden stukken – Zending', *Ibid.* 1902-02 (11 January 1902), 14-15, there 14. B.D. Eerdman had previously uttered similar words. See: B.D. Eerdman, 'Ingezonden stukken – De zending', *Ibid.* 1901-52 (28 December 1901), 413-414.

<sup>27</sup> Still in 1917, De Graaf contended that the principles – *not* the doctrines or traditions – of Christianity were those of civilisation itself; to civilise, he argued, necessarily meant to Christianise. See: H.T. de Graaf, *Beschaving en zending* (Haarlem 1917), esp. 29. Non-modernist Christians placed an equal sign between 'Christianity' and 'civilisation' as well. However, their views on what 'Christianity' and 'civilisation' were, differed from those of modernists. They defined 'Christianity' in more dogmatic terms than liberal Protestants did and saw 'civilisation' as being inextricably linked to their dogmatic interpretation of Christianity.

<sup>28</sup> And, as Meyboom stressed in 1878, because the sixteenth-century Reformers had not renounced Roman Catholic ecclesiology: in Protestantism, the 'Roman' practice to resist ritualistic, ceremonial and doctrinal reforms once rituals, ceremonies and doctrines were laid down in regulations and confessions of faith was maintained. According to Meyboom, Roman Catholicism corresponded to an 'infant stage' of intellectual development. Moreover, the Roman Catholic Church tried everything it could to keep its members in this infant stage. See: H.U. Meyboom, 'De kerk der toekomst', *Onze Godsdienstprediking* II.21 (1878), 353-372, there 361-365.

<sup>29</sup> E.g.: Balsem, *Zoekende liefde*, 24; H. Bakels, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – De komende godsdienst-vorm of Kerkelijke perspectieven', *De Hervorming* 1918-32 (10 August 1918), 125-126; M.C. van Mourik Broekman,



Although old-school modernists rejected the ‘absoluteness’ of Christianity, in the sense that they did not consider the Christian religion to be the exclusive path to salvation, they did believe that there was a difference in degree between Christianity and other religions.<sup>30</sup> On the ladder of evolution, Christianity stood at the top – with modernism on the highest rung –, animism at the bottom and religions such as Buddhism and Islam somewhere in between.<sup>31</sup> Modernist advocates of foreign mission accordingly argued that the cause of modernism was the cause of human progress. Why, they asked, should Dutch modernists restrict their endeavour to advance that cause to their own country? What could justify a distinction between near neighbours, living in their vicinity, and far neighbours, many of whom had never even heard of Christianity at all? Did the latter not deserve to be uplifted just as much as the former?<sup>32</sup> Champions of foreign mission therefore stood up against those, such as H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, who deemed it premature to civilise non-Christians on the other side of the world as long as there were many poverty-stricken and spiritually underdeveloped people in the Netherlands dying to share in the fruits of progress.<sup>33</sup>

In contrast with orthodox Protestants, who wanted to ‘indoctrinate’ non-Christians with their own dogmas, and *evangelischen*, for whom ‘education’ meant filling ‘pagans’ with awe for the person of Jesus Christ and teaching those pagans how to do as he did, modernists used the word ‘education’ in a missionary context to refer to their endeavour to turn humans into individuals.<sup>34</sup> Non-Christians should not be taught how to accept Jesus as Redeemer or how to ‘mimic’ the life of Jesus, but should instead be taught how they could internalise the principles on which Jesus’s religious and social ethics were based.<sup>35</sup> Non-Christians should be guided to become *individuals*, possessing a *personal* faith and able to take full mental and

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‘Hoofdartikel – De leuze “Los van het christendom”, o.a. naar aanleiding van Wannée’s “Religieuze levens- en wereldbeschouwing”’, *Ibid.* 1921-44 (5 November 1921), 345-347, there 346. Van Senden argued that if a universal religion were ever to come into being, it could basically be nothing else than “radical liberal Christianity” (“*radicaal vrijzinnig Christendom*”). Yet, the chance that it would come into being had decreased over the years: due to the influence of right-wing modernism, contemporary Dutch liberal Protestantism could hardly be called radical – on the contrary, it “seeks alliance with forms of Christianity that are even more tradition-bound and less congruent with the idea of a universal religion [than itself]. With regard to this idea, the so-called turn to the right in modernist circles is simply disastrous.” (“...aansluiting aan traditioneel nog meer gebonden en voor de idee van universele religie nog minder geschikte vormen van Christendom. Voor deze idee is de z.g. rechte koers in de vrijzinnige gelederen eenvoudiger als een ongeluk te beschouwen.”) Quoted from: G.H. van Senden, *Christendom en universele religie* (Arnhem 1927), 46-47.

<sup>30</sup> H.S. Balsem, ‘De zending en de moderne richting’, *Geloof en leven* XII (1878), 165-187, there 179; H.S. Balsem, *Zendingsrede, uitgesproken den 28<sup>sten</sup> Mei 1891 in het kerkgebouw der Herv. Gemeente te Helmond, ter gelegenheid van de jaarvergadering der Afdeeling ‘s-Hertogenbosch van het Ned. Zendinggenootschap* (‘s-Hertogenbosch [1891]), 6; Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 379; Boone, ‘Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885’, 38.

<sup>31</sup> Compared to Christianity, Islam, for example, was seen as ethically and intellectually inferior. See, e.g.: Balsem, ‘De zending en de moderne richting’, 175-176; J.C. Schagen van Soelen, ‘Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending’, *De Hervorming* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 85-87, there 86; Balsem, *Zendingsrede*, 8; J. Herderscheê, ‘Mohammed en zijn godsdienst’, *De Hervorming* 1899-08 (25 February 1899), 29-30, there 30. See also: Boone, ‘Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885’, 39.

<sup>32</sup> E.J.W. Koch, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1877-03 (20 January 1877), 3-4.

<sup>33</sup> H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, ‘Een repliek’, *Ibid.* 1894-34 (25 August 1894), 134-135. Many years later, J.H. de Vries (1860-1938), a Dutch Reformed minister who had served several congregations belonging to the *Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Protestant Church in the Dutch East Indies or PKNI), made a similar argument: before engaging in foreign mission, modernists should try to make Europe ‘more Christian’. See: J.H. de Vries, ‘Zijn wij gerechtigd tot zending?’, *Teekenen des Tijds* XIX (1917), 50-56, there 55.

<sup>34</sup> J.A. Beijerman, ‘Het Nederlandsche Zendinggenootschap’, *De Hervorming* 1890-33 (16 August 1890), 129-130.

<sup>35</sup> E.g.: J. Hooykaas Herderscheê, “Maar al te dikwijls”, *Ibid.* 1874-07 (12 February 1874), 2-3.

material *responsibility* for their own life. In response to modernists who felt that foreign mission should be confined to the founding of schools, Wiersma stated that that would not be enough. If children attended a school founded by a missionary, but stayed under the influence of “fanatical [pagan and Mohammedan] priests, credulous parents and unreasonable people” outside of school, he stated, then “it would be impossible [for this school] to breed human beings who, even just a little bit, live up to what it means to be ‘human’ in the full sense of the word.”<sup>36</sup>

Men such as Wiersma kept harping on about the inextricable relation between Christianity and civilisation. As such, completely in line with the optimistic and complacent outlook on life and firm belief in progress that was so characteristic of old-school modernism, they rather uncritically looked at their own culture as the best there was. Yet, old-school modernism came to be severely criticised when malcontentism began to manifest itself around 1900. Moreover, socialism, which vehemently agitated against capitalism, began to take root among modernists around the same time. The previously-mentioned arguments against foreign mission were still put forward, but as of then, a new one came to be voiced: some modernists openly questioned whether the dissemination of the ‘Christian’ civilisation was as salutary as champions of foreign mission claimed it to be.

G. de Leeuw probably expressed the fiercest condemnation of foreign mission in modernist circles in the autumn of 1910. While repeating the objection that foreign mission infringed on the free development of religious life, he denounced the self-satisfaction with which (liberal) Christians looked at their own culture. After all, “foreign mission opens the door for all the miseries of European ‘civilisation’ – although against its intentions, mission carries with it gin, opium, syphilis and bayonets as a sting in the tail, and this should stamp it as a highly questionable endeavour in the eyes of every right-minded person.”<sup>37</sup> C. Hille Ris Lambers, an advocate of foreign mission, responded by rhetorically asking why modernists should still regard Christianity as something suitable for themselves if it really was unworthy to be spread.<sup>38</sup> What is more, according to Hille Ris Lambers, the biggest consumers of opium and gin were non-Christian natives, while the spread of venereal diseases was in large part a result of the sexual permissiveness of these same natives. The first Europeans with whom indigenous peoples in the non-Christian world came into contact were usually missionaries, who were, on the whole, ethically more refined than other Europeans. How then, Hille Ris Lambers asked, could De Leeuw think that foreign mission led to degradation? Was modernism not based on the notion of the ‘power of personality’, on the conviction that social interaction between spiritually highly developed and spiritually less developed individuals is beneficial to the latter?<sup>39</sup> Yet, De Leeuw’s

<sup>36</sup> “...blijft zulk een kind dan geheel onder heidensche en mohammedaansche toestanden, onder den invloed van fanatieke priesters, lichtgeloovige ouders en redeloze menschen, dan is het onmogelijk, behoudens de uitzonderingen, dat er menschen uit kunnen groeien, die ook maar eenigszins aan ‘t idee mensch beantwoorden.” Quoted from: Wiersma, *Ervaringen gedurende mijn twaalfjarig zendingsleven*, 19.

<sup>37</sup> “Dat de zending de poort opent voor al de ellenden der Europeesche ‘beschaving’; dat zij – hoezeer tegen haar bedoeling – jenever, opium, syphilis en bajonetten als venenum in cauda met zich voert; moet haar reeds stempelen, in het oog van ieder weldenkend mensch, tot een hoogste [sic] bedenkelijk verschijnsel.” Quoted from: G. de Leeuw, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Afblijven!’, *De Hervorming* 1910-45 (5 November 1910), 358. See also: ‘Kerknieuws – Zending’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXVII.307 (5 November 1910), evening paper A, 1.

<sup>38</sup> C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Afblijven!’, *De Hervorming* 1910-44 (29 October 1910), 351.

<sup>39</sup> C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Zending’, *Ibid.* 1910-47 (19 November 1910), 374. In the same issue of *De Hervorming*, missiologist J.R. Callenbach (1862-1945) also gave a response to De Leeuw. Callenbach was not a modernist – he sympathised with the *ethische* faction in the Dutch Reformed Church –, but felt the need to take up his

echo did not die down. Twelve years later, for example, P. Eldering criticised the link between Christianity and civilisation that had long been taken for granted, as the so-called ‘civilised’ and Christian world had brought a war into being that was “more atrocious than any war ever waged before – a war accepted as a necessary evil and glorified or sanctified as a God-given order by the official ‘Christian’ churches and their servants.” Foreign mission, he concluded, was demeritorious as long as Christians did not give short shrift to capitalism, the ‘evil’ responsible for the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>40</sup> Evidently, modernists such as De Leeuw and Eldering could not be convinced.

In the modernist movement, there were three men who were particularly eager to defend the cause of foreign mission:<sup>41</sup> J.N. Wiersma and H.S. Balsem, who have already been mentioned, and M. Joustra (1871-1926), who worked as a missionary on behalf of the NZG in Northern Sumatra between 1894 and 1905.<sup>42</sup> Balsem, who had served several Protestant congregations in the East in Indies between 1864 and 1874, used the fact that Wiersma had been a missionary from 1862 until 1874 as an argument in favour of foreign mission. “Wiersma,” he argued, “is the living proof that the [modernist] movement could not only contribute to the Dutch Missionary Society by giving money to it.”<sup>43</sup> As long as it accepted a modernist as Wiersma in its midst, E.J.W. Koch similarly argued, modernists should not refrain from offering their services to the NZG.<sup>44</sup>

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pen in *De Hervorming* nonetheless, as he did not want foreign mission to be given a bad name. He denied De Leeuw’s conviction that foreign mission hindered religious life to develop freely, by pointing out that it was decided at the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh that every missionary had to respect indigenous religious life. See: J.R. Callenbach, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Zending’, *Ibid.* 1910-47 (19 November 1910), 374-375, there 375.

<sup>40</sup> “Laat ik [...] er dan op mogen wijzen, dat er van 1914 tot 1918 in de ‘Christelijke’ wereld een oorlog geweest is, zóó gruwelijk als er nooit een op aarde is gevoerd, dat deze oorlog door de officieele ‘Christelijke’ kerken en hare dienaars is aanvaard als een noodzakelijk kwaad of verheerlijkt en geheiligd als een door God gewilde taak.” Quoted from: P. Eldering, ‘Ingezonden – De zending en wij’, *Ibid.* 1922-29 (22 July 1922), 230.

<sup>41</sup> Boone mentions, next to Wiersma, two other missionaries with modernist sympathies: T.A.F. van der Valk (1828-1874) and S.E. Harthoorn (1831-1883). These two did not play any role whatsoever regarding the popularisation of foreign mission in the Dutch modernist movement in the period of study. Harthoorn came to the conclusion that indigenous Indonesians were not yet intellectually developed enough to understand and internalise the religious principles of Jesus, while Van der Valk even became a freethinker. See: Boone, “In het belang van zedelijkheid en recht”, 91; Boone, ‘Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885’, 24-32. De Jong mentions that the following three assistant ministers trained by the NZG were modernists as well: M.H. Schippers (1853-1916), J. ten Hove (1857-1938) and J.H.W. van der Miesen (1873-?). See: Chr.G.F. de Jong, ‘Een verloren generatie zendelingen in de Molukken in de negentiende eeuw. De “vijftigers”’, *Documentatieblad voor de Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse Zending en Overzeese Kerken* VII.1 (2000), 24-46, there 42. Between 1883 and 1904, six articles written by Schippers were published in *De Hervorming*, of which four dealt with foreign mission. *De Hervorming* of 14 December 1912 contained one mission-related letter to the editor written by Ten Hove. See: M.H. Schippers, ‘Binnenland – R.C.-zendelingen in de Minahassa’, *De Hervorming* 1883-08 (24 February 1883), 31; ‘Hulprediker of zendeling’, *Ibid.* 1886-11 (13 March 1886), 43-44; ‘In memoriam’, *Ibid.* 1895-52 (28 December 1895), 206-207; ‘Uit Neerl. Indië’, *Ibid.* 1898-47 (19 November 1898), 187-188; J. ten Hove, ‘Ingezonden stukken – De schoolquaestie in N. Indië’, *Ibid.* 1912-50 (14 December 1912), 408. After repatriating to the Netherlands, Schippers was the pastor of the NPB branch in Vlaardingen between 1903 and 1908, while Ten Hove was a religious instructor in the VVH branch in Haarlem between 1912 and 1916. See: ‘Binnenland’, *Rotterdamsch Nieuwsblad* XXXVIII.11636 (29 February 1916), 2; ‘Begravenis J. ten Hove’, *Het Vaderland* (17 November 1938), morning paper A, 2.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed account of Wiersma’s stay in the Batak region, written by his son, see: H.W. Joustra, *Een vrijzinnige zendeling in de Bataklanden 1894-1905. Voordracht gehouden op zondagmiddag 23 september 1984, in het Jeugdgebouw te Odoorn, in het kader van de 34<sup>ste</sup> “Zwinglibondconferentie”* (s.l. [1984]) [unpublished manuscript].

<sup>43</sup> “... Wiersma het levend bewijs was, dat hun richting in dat genootschap nog op andere wijze dan door contributiën kon meewerken...” Quoted from: H.S. Balsem, ‘Voorstel’, *De Hervorming* 1880-01 (3 January 1880), 2-3, there 3.

<sup>44</sup> Balsem, ‘De zending en de moderne richting’, 181; E.J.W. Koch, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1877-03 (20 January 1877), 3-4, there 4.

This argument was connected to another one.<sup>45</sup> Foreign mission, its modernist champions reasoned, was indispensable for refuting the orthodox accusation, mentioned in chapter 3, that modernists were not entitled to call themselves ‘Christians’. Modernists’ lack of enthusiasm for foreign mission, Koch admonished in 1877, only confirmed orthodox Protestants in that conviction. Therefore, “we have to double our zeal and demonstrate that those who claim that ‘modernists are nothing more than iconoclasts, only interested in demolishing [the existing religious life]’, are spreading lies and slanderous talk.”<sup>46</sup> Yet, as Wiersma noticed eight years later, there was a strong tendency in modernist circles to think that foreign mission could, at least for the moment, best be left to orthodoxy, either because it was assumed that non-Christians were intellectually incapable of understanding a modernist interpretation of Christianity, or because foreign mission in itself was believed to be inextricably interwoven with a supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity and continued to be seen as a hindrance to the free development of religious life.<sup>47</sup>

Due to such sentiments, champions of foreign mission maintained, it was unfair to attribute the relatively low number of modernists actively involved with the NZG solely to the missionary association itself. True, the NZG had not categorically repudiated modernist beliefs in the 1860s – causing some moderately orthodox Protestants as D. Chantepie de la Saussaye (1818-1874), one of the most influential *ethische* theologians, to follow the example of their confessionalist co-religionists and to dissociate themselves from the NZG<sup>48</sup> –, but its chief commissioners did tacitly agree with each other around 1880 not to admit anyone with modernist views to the NZG’s missionary training school.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, the widespread indifference towards and prejudice against foreign mission among modernists were just as responsible for the lack of NZG board members.<sup>50</sup> To a large extent, it was the fault of liberal Protestants themselves that they did

<sup>45</sup> However, in the 1880s, Wiersma stated that he could understand why many modernists were not willing to support the NZG – without sharing this unwillingness himself –, as there were no modernists active as missionaries on behalf of the NZG at the time. See: [J.N. Wiersma in:] ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvoerbond – Nijmegen’, *Ibid.* 1885-08 (21 February 1885), 30. In the year in which Wiersma published his article, there were, however, at least two modernists serving the PKNI who were trained by the NZG: Schippers and Ten Hove. See: Chr.G.F. de Jong, *De Protestantse Kerk in de Midden-Molukken 1803-1900. Een bronnenpublicatie II. 1854-1900* (Leiden 2006), 567-568, 620. Around 1900, at least four men who sympathised with the modernist movement were working as ministers in the PKNI or as missionaries on behalf of the NZG in the Dutch East Indies: Schippers (in the PKNI from 1880 until 1902), Ten Hove (in the PKNI from 1883 until 1911), Van der Miesen (from 1898 until 1911; on behalf of the NZG between 1898 and 1903; afterwards in the PKNI) and Joustra (on behalf of the NZG from 1894 until 1905). For the first three, see: *Ibid.*, 640-641, 644. For Joustra, see: Joustra, *Een vrijzinnige zendeling in de Bataklanden*. Well into the nineteenth century, it was not uncommon for ministers serving the PKNI to have been trained by the NZG. See: P.N. Holtrop, ‘Van kerkstaat naar particulier initiatief. De Indische kerk en het Nederlandse Zendelinggenootschap’, in: G.J. Schutte (ed.), *Het Indisch Sion. De Gereformeerde Kerk onder de Verenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Hilversum 2002), 225-236, there 227.

<sup>46</sup> “Wij moeten onze ijver verdubbelen en toonen met de daad dat het leugen en laster is, als sommigen van ons zeggen: die mannen van de nieuwe richting zijn sloopers, die slechts van afbreken weten.” Quoted from: E.J.W. Koch, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *De Hervorming* 1877-03 (20 January 1877), 3-4, there 4.

<sup>47</sup> As noticed in: J.N. Wiersma, ‘Binnenland – Waarom niet meer?’, *Ibid.* 1885-05 (31 January 1885), 18-19. See also: Boone, “‘In het belang van zedelijkheid en recht’”, 112.

<sup>48</sup> A justification thereof is given in: D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Waarom ik het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap heb verlaten. Verantwoording aan mijne gemeente* (Rotterdam 1864).

<sup>49</sup> De Jong, *De Protestantse Kerk in de Midden-Molukken 1803-1900*, 567. For a detailed account of the complicated relationship between the NZG and modernism, see: A.J. van den Berg, *Kerkelijke strijd en zendingsorganisatie. De scheuring in het Nederlands Zendelinggenootschap rond het midden van de negentiende eeuw* (Zoetermeer 1997).

<sup>50</sup> Orthodox Protestants, on the contrary, felt that liberal tendencies influenced the NZG too much, which was the chief reason for them to found missionary organisations of their own. See, e.g.: I.H. Enklaar, *Kom over en help ons! Twaalf opstellen over de Nederlandse zending in de negentiende eeuw* (The Hague 1981), 85.

not exert influence in the missionary association.<sup>51</sup> As modernist champions of foreign mission stressed, modernists should make use of the opportunity that the NZG, the only Dutch missionary organisation without a specific doctrinal basis,<sup>52</sup> offered them to shape a foreign mission in accordance with their own principles, and should actively try to become better represented at the NZG's administrative level.<sup>53</sup>

Of course, the NZG offered that same opportunity to non-modernists. Wiersma admitted this, and also acknowledged that modernists were at best only tolerated in the NZG.<sup>54</sup> Yet, if modernists really wanted to fulfil their vocation to contribute to the realisation of the Kingdom of God, they had no other choice but to support the NZG. Wiersma and others recognised that it was no serious alternative to found a missionary association solely based on modernist principles: apart from the preference given in modernist circles to associations with a 'general', 'neutral' basis, the objections on grounds of principle to foreign mission as such would hinder such a modernist missionary association from attracting enough support to be viable.<sup>55</sup> Besides, modernists had the right to be in the NZG – even more, as its founders had been “men of progress,” it could be argued that modernists, looking at themselves as the most progressive Protestants in the present age, were their legitimate heirs.<sup>56</sup> Just as those who urged Reformed liberals to fight for their rights within the Dutch Reformed Church rather than to give up fighting and to join another church denomination, those advocating foreign mission incited their fellow modernists not to reconcile themselves to the dominance of (moderate) orthodoxy in the NZG. The association would benefit from a stronger modernist involvement. Liberal Protestantism, to quote Joustra, could serve as a leaven within the NZG, “steadily purifying its methods and helping to establish more clarity and verity at the expense of the half-heartedness currently existing [in its midst].”<sup>57</sup>

The modernist movement itself would also benefit from such a stronger involvement with the NZG, its advocates asserted. It would enliven congregational life in the Netherlands,<sup>58</sup> or, to quote Wiersma, foreign mission “has an inspirational and sanctifying effect on the community that

<sup>51</sup> J.A. Beijerman, ‘Binnenland – Nederl. Zendelinggenootschap’, *De Hervorming* 1883-30 (28 July 1883), 118-119, there 118; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Binnenland – Waarom niet meer?’, *Ibid.* 1885-05 (31 January 1885), 18-19, there 19; J.N. Wiersma, ‘De zending in het licht van het Congres van Chicago’, *Ibid.* 1894-36 (8 September 1894), 142-143, there 143.

<sup>52</sup> In the 1890s, Wiersma noticed a more ‘liberal’ atmosphere in the NZG. See, e.g.: J.N. Wiersma, ‘Het Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap’, *Ibid.* 1894-29 (21 July 1894), 113-114; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap’, *Ibid.* 1897-02 (9 January 1897), 6.

<sup>53</sup> J.N. Wiersma, ‘Binnenland – Vergadering van ‘t Ned. Zend.-Genootschap’, *Ibid.* 1898-30 (23 July 1898), 120; M. Joustra, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1902-12 (22 March 1902), 93-94, there 94.

<sup>54</sup> [J.N. Wiersma in:] ‘Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenver.’, *Ibid.* 1888-33 (18 August 1888), 130-131, there 130.

<sup>55</sup> K., ‘Ingezonden stukken – Ter overweging aan het hoofdbestuur van het Ned. Zend. Genootschap’, *Ibid.* 1888-22 (2 June 1888), 88; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap’, *Ibid.* 1905-21 (27 May 1905), 165; M. Joustra, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Zending’, *Ibid.* 1910-25 (18 June 1910), 197-198, there 197; M. Joustra, ‘De bond en Indië – Kunnen wij voor Indië iets doen?’, *Ibid.* 1925-06 (7 February 1925), 43-45, there 44; [A.E.F. Junod], ‘Bonds- en ander nieuws – Rectificatie’, *Ibid.* 1925-07 (14 February 1925), 54; M. Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending, toegelicht voor vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen* (Baarn 1913), 33; ‘Kerknieuws – Moderne theologen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCIV.30196 (7 April 1921), morning paper, 6.

<sup>56</sup> “Mannen van den vooruitgang.” Quoted from: Chantepie de la Saussaye, *Waarom ik het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap heb verlaten*, 21-23. Chantepie de la Saussaye did not agree with this line of reasoning. See: *Ibid.*, 23-25.

<sup>57</sup> “Maar van meer belang nog lijkt mij dat met onze medewerking onze invloed wast, en deze een corrigens kan zijn bijv. in zake methode, en wellicht ook kan helpen om tot meer klaarheid en waarheid te komen in zake veel halfslachtigs, dat nog bestaat.” Quoted from: ‘Kerknieuws – Moderne theologen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCIV.30196 (7 April 1921), morning paper, 6.

<sup>58</sup> J.N. Wiersma, ‘Het Nederl. Zendeling-Genootschap’, *De Hervorming* 1902-51 (20 December 1902), 402-403, there 403.

engages in it.”<sup>59</sup> Conducting foreign mission would force modernists to articulate the essence of their religious beliefs in straightforward and positive words, something with which they, as analysed in chapter 3, intensely struggled. This, Joustra maintained, would be a foil to the richness of liberal Protestantism,<sup>60</sup> and would remind modernists that the Gospel “is an invaluable treasure, an inexhaustible source of spiritual power, comfort and peace.”<sup>61</sup> Foreign mission enriched and deepened the religious life of Christians in the Netherlands and would stimulate modernists to intensify their aim to ‘Christianise’ the society in which they were themselves living. By being confronted with ‘pagans’ abroad, Joustra believed, modernists would become more aware of the fact that there were still many spiritual ‘heathens’ and materially needy living in their own society as well.<sup>62</sup> Foreign mission was also a source of inspiration in a different way: it fostered ecumenism. The 1910 Edinburgh World Missionary Conference had proven that denominational walls were no obstacles to collaborating on shared interests.<sup>63</sup> At gatherings such as these, liberal Protestants were not exactly welcomed with open arms, but this, Joustra believed, would definitely change. If modernists themselves would take a keener interest in mission-related affairs, then orthodox moderates would be less reluctant to accept them in their midst.<sup>64</sup>

What is more, foreign mission, its modernist advocates asserted, had a positive effect on Western society at large. Missionaries were bridgeheads between indigenous Asian and African cultures and the ‘civilised’, Christian world. By taking part in the daily lives, festivities, rituals and ceremonies of the communities of indigenes, missionaries were able to study the beliefs, customs, linguistic particularities and social norms of these peoples in great detail. Subsequently, they turned their findings into encyclopaedia, monographs, dictionaries, grammars and maps. As a result, foreign mission made large contributions to fields as diverse as comparative religious studies, cultural anthropology, ethnology, geography and philology. It highly enriched human knowledge. Modernist champions of foreign mission were not the only ones making this argument,<sup>65</sup> but they, knowing how much value liberal Protestants attached to the augmentation of scientific and scholarly knowledge, hoped it could convince modernists of the intellectual blessings of missionary work. Joustra, for example, used it as one of the clinchers in his 1913 brochure *De beteekenis der zending, toegelicht voor vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen* (*The Importance of Foreign Mission, Explained to Religious Liberals*), published on behalf of the NPB.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>59</sup> “[Zendingsarbeid] werkt bij uitnemendheid bezielend en heiligend terug op de gemeente, waarvan zij uitgaat.” Quoted from: [J.N. Wiersma in:] ‘Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenvereniging’, *Ibid.* 1888-33 (18 August 1888), 130-131, there 130. See also: [J.N. Wiersma in:] ‘Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenvereniging’, *Ibid.* 1888-21 (26 May 1888), 83.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Kerknieuws – Moderne theologen’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* XCIV.30196 (7 April 1921), morning paper, 6.

<sup>61</sup> “...welk een grooten schat, welk een onuitputtelijke bron van geestelijke kracht, vertroosting, vrede wij in het Evangelie bezitten...” Quoted from: Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 31. As early as 1876, H.C. Lohr noted in *De Hervorming* that foreign mission is “a source of augmentation of [modernists’] own spiritual life.” (“...een bron van vermeerdering van eigen geestelijk leven.”) Quoted from: [H.C. Lohr], ‘Het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap’, *De Hervorming* 1876-15 (13 April 1876), 1-2, there 2.

<sup>62</sup> Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 32. See also: Balsem, ‘De zending en de moderne richting’, 176.

<sup>63</sup> Joustra wrote this in 1913. Later, the 1910 World Missionary Conference would generally be seen as the beginning of the ecumenical movement. See: B. Stanley, *The World Missionary Conference, Edinburgh 1910* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge 2009), 5-7.

<sup>64</sup> Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 32.

<sup>65</sup> See, e.g.: N. Poulain (J. Riemsma and J.J. van Toorenenbergen eds.), *De evangelische zending als getuige van de Goddelijkheid des Christendoms* (Utrecht 1868), 280-284.

<sup>66</sup> Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 29-31. A review of this brochure was published in: A.S. Carpentier Altling, ‘De modernen en de zending’, *De Hervorming* 1913-21 (24 May 1913), 161-163. Thirty years earlier, A.J.H.W.

With regard to the Dutch East Indies, the mission site of the NZG, foreign mission also had political implications. Although its modernist advocates did not want it to be controlled or supervised by the Dutch government in The Hague or the colonial authorities in Batavia, they did want the state to facilitate it. This was a point of view they had in common with Kuyper's Anti-Revolutionary Party.<sup>67</sup> In 1896, while noticing that political liberals were generally indifferent in this matter, Wiersma even praised Kuyper for urging the government to amend all laws related to the East Indies in such a way that Christianity could be spread more easily. Muslim preachers, for example, could peregrinate without restrictions, whereas Christian missionaries were only allowed to settle in or travel through the East Indies if the governor-general in Batavia had permitted them to do so.<sup>68</sup> It was, as Wiersma stressed, to the advantage of the government itself to facilitate Christian missionary activities, as Christianity safeguarded political stability in the East Indies.<sup>69</sup> Balsem agreed: the hearts, the houses and the communities of indigenous Christians looked "rather different from and better than" those of Islamic and Buddhist indigenes; they behaved as decent, law-abiding civilians.<sup>70</sup> The Dutch government should therefore take a more active interest in 'civilising' its East Indies subjects – and hence in foreign mission, for example by generously subsidising missionary-founded schools. These schools, Joustra admitted, did not have the same amount of resources or the same number of (qualified) teachers at their disposal as the official government-run schools, but they attracted and reached more pupils than their state-owned counterparts.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, the expansion of Christian-based education was for the government's own sake, as Christianity, contrary to indigenous faiths, enhanced the self-respect of the indigenous populations of the East Indies; "the development of one's sense of dignity," as an article in the Roman Catholic newspaper *De Tijd* that was quoted with approval in *De Hervorming* put forward, was "the best safeguard against social wrongs and the undermining of the colonial power."<sup>72</sup>

That is to say, *liberal* Christianity could enhance the self-respect of the indigenous populations of the East Indies. Orthodox Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries did not help to increase non-Christians' sense of self-esteem – while a modernist missionary fully respected the intrinsic value of every human being and tried to liberate non-Christian indigenes from the chains of 'rigid' religious beliefs and 'unethical' cultural habits,<sup>73</sup> these others simply

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Brandt had accentuated the scholarly significance of foreign mission, by calling missionaries "pioneers of geography and ethnology, often discoverers of new [natural] resources, trailblazers of new trade routes." ("...*pionniers* [sic] *van land- en volkenkunde, niet zelden ontdekkers van nieuwe hulpbronnen, baanbrekers van nieuwe kanalen voor den handel.*") See: A.J.H.W. Brandt, 'Zending', *Ibid.* 1883-32 (11 August 1883), 126.

<sup>67</sup> J.A.H. Verkuyt, 'De spanning tussen westers imperialisme en kolonialisme en zending in het tijdperk van de "ethische koloniale politiek"', in: J. de Bruijn (ed.), *Een land nog niet in kaart gebracht. Aspecten van het protestants-christelijk leven in Nederland in de jaren 1880-1940* (Amsterdam 1987), 163-216, there 182.

<sup>68</sup> J.N. Wiersma, 'Zending', *De Hervorming* 1896-52 (26 December 1896), 206-207, there 206.

<sup>69</sup> J.N. Wiersma, 'Over Indische belangen', *Ibid.* 1900-47 (24 November 1900), 363.

<sup>70</sup> "...*eenigszins anders en beter...*" Quoted from: H.S. Balsem, 'De moderneren en het Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap', *Bibliotheek van Moderne Theologie en Letterkunde VI* <sup>(second series)</sup> (1886), 149-161, there 158. See also: E.F. Kruijff, *Geschiedenis van het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap en zijne zendingsposten* (Groningen 1894), 172. See also: [H.S. Balsem in:] 'Binnenland – Eindhoven', *De Hervorming* 1879-26 (28 June 1879), 2.

<sup>71</sup> Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 24-26. See also: J.N. Wiersma, 'Zending', *De Hervorming* 1896-52 (26 December 1896), 206-207, there 207.

<sup>72</sup> "De ontwikkeling van 't gevoel van eigenwaarde bij den Javaan nu is 't beste middel om knevelarij en gezagsaansmatiging tegen te gaan." Quoted in: 'Binnenland – Christen-inlanders', *Ibid.* 1897-33 (14 August 1897), 131.

<sup>73</sup> Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 23; C. Hille Ris Lambers, 'Ingezonden stukken – Zending', *De Hervorming* 1910-47 (19 November 1910), 374. See also: Balsem, 'De zending en de moderne richting', 171.

wanted to bind those indigenes in new chains, the chains of dogmatism and clericalism. Foreign mission based on liberal Protestant principles could counterbalance the activities of orthodox Protestant and Roman Catholic missionaries.

Whereas missionaries working on behalf of the NZG, orthodox and doctrinal as they might be, at least had the intention of delivering indigenes “from a state of ignorance and immorality” and to “steadily civilise them,” their Catholic equivalents were preoccupied with “baptising whomever they could lay their hands on, at ungodly hours.”<sup>74</sup> The latter did not even hesitate to re-baptise natives who had only recently converted to Protestantism.<sup>75</sup> Uninterested in indigenes’ spiritual development,<sup>76</sup> they only cared about proselytising, preferably at the expense of the spread of Protestantism.<sup>77</sup> This was, for example, the case in the Minahassa. Years before a whole series of articles on the presence of Roman Catholic missionaries in this part of the East Indies would be published in *De Hervorming*,<sup>78</sup> Wiersma urged his fellow modernists to speak out against Catholic ‘usurpation’ of a Protestant mission site. In his 1876 ‘memoirs’ dealing with his life as a missionary in the 1860s and early 1870s, he dedicated no less than thirty-eight pages, nearly a sixth of his entire book, to his “struggle against Rome.”<sup>79</sup> He gave an extensive account of the vicious practice of a Roman Catholic priest – a certain father De Vries, as Wiersma would later reveal<sup>80</sup> – who managed to ‘Catholicise’ dozens of recent converts to Protestantism.<sup>81</sup> Ten years later, in 1886, Wiersma informed the readership of *De Hervorming* that itinerant Catholic missionaries were still trying to ‘conquer’ the Minahassa in the name of their faith.<sup>82</sup> He blamed the colonial authorities in Batavia for sanctioning the position that the Roman Catholic Church had appropriated in these territories.<sup>83</sup> If modernists continued to withhold their support for the NZG, Wiersma implied, they would have the expansion of Rome’s power on their conscience, as the

<sup>74</sup> “De hulppredikers waren als zendelingen van het Ned. Zendinggenootschap [...] werkzaam, om met geduld en volharding de bevolking op te heffen uit een staat van onwetendheid en zedeloosheid en haar langzamerhand te beschaven. En nu de priester [...], wat deed hij? [...] [Hij] doopte wat hij doopen kon, bij nacht en ontij.” Quoted from: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – De roomsch-katholieke propaganda in de Minahassa’, *De Hervorming* 1883-22 (2 June 1883), 86.

<sup>75</sup> M.H. Schippers, ‘Binnenland – R.C.-zendelingen in de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1883-08 (24 February 1883), 31; Balsem, *Zendingsrede*, 12; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Minahassa-toestanden’, *De Hervorming* 1899-06 (11 February 1899), 21.

<sup>76</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Binnenland – De roomsch-katholieke propaganda in de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1883-22 (2 June 1883), 86; ‘Buitenland – De protestantsche zending aangevallen’, *Ibid.* 1890-35 (30 August 1890), 139-140, there 139.

<sup>77</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Over de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1886-32 (7 August 1886), 128; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Nog eens: de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1899-32 (12 August 1899), 134.

<sup>78</sup> See, e.g.: J.A.Th. Krol, ‘Ingezonden stukken’, *Ibid.* 1898-38 (17 September 1898), 153; W. van Lingen, ‘De Minahassa’, *Ibid.* (22 July 1899), 122; J.N. Wiersma, ‘Aanvang der roomsche propaganda in de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1899-33 (19 August 1899), 137; J.H. Balsem, ‘De intrede van Rome in de Minahassa’, *Ibid.* 1899-33 (19 August 1899), 137.

<sup>79</sup> “*Strijd met Rome*.” See: Wiersma, *Ervaringen gedurende mijn twaalfjarig zendingsleven*, 148-185. For another article in which the advancement of Roman Catholicism in the Minahassa was looked upon with concern, see: Balsem, ‘De zending en de moderne richting’, 166.

<sup>80</sup> J.N. Wiersma, ‘De roomsche missie in de Minahassa’, *De Hervorming* 1886-34 (21 August 1886), 136-137, there 136. The priest in question was Jesuit Johannes de Vries (1823-1887). See: K.A. Steenbrink, *Catholics in Indonesia, 1808-1942. A Documented History I. A Modest Recovery, 1808-1900* (Leiden 2003), 481-482.

<sup>81</sup> Wiersma, *Ervaringen gedurende mijn twaalfjarig zendingsleven*, 181.

<sup>82</sup> In certain parts of the Minahassa, Roman Catholicism had been present in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when these areas were ruled by Spain and Portugal. See: R. Schuiling, ‘Toestand van het zendingswerk der Christelijke Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië’, *Tijdschrift van het Koninklijk Nederlandsch Aardrijkskundig Genootschap XV*<sup>(second series)</sup> (1898), 880-884, there 881; A.J. van Aernsbergen, ‘Uit en over de Minahassa III. De Katholieke Kerk en hare Missie in de Minahassa’, *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land- en volkenkunde van Nederlandsch-Indië LXXXI* (1925), 8-60, there 8-31, esp. 25-31.

<sup>83</sup> J.N. Wiersma, ‘De roomsche missie in de Minahassa’, *De Hervorming* 1886-34 (21 August 1886), 136-137.



NZG would not then be able to intensify its activities to neutralise that expansion in the Minahassa.

To quote C. Hille Ris Lambers, modernists should not allow orthodox Protestantism to expand its sphere of influence in the East Indies either, as liberal Protestantism was “a greater force of salvation” than orthodoxy<sup>84</sup> – it was the only kind of religion that could *really* enhance the indigenes’ sense of self-worth. After all, more than any other religion, it emphasised the value of the individual personality, stressing the importance of self-determination, also in matters of faith. As a modernist missionary did not annoy easily impressionable ‘pagans’ with doctrinal pettifoggery, Wiersma highlighted, he was the best missionary of all.<sup>85</sup>

#### 4. Liberal Protestant Discourse in a Missionary Context

Foreign mission, its modernist champions concluded, ultimately came down to the personality of the missionary,<sup>86</sup> who should firmly take the intellectual grasp of his target audience into account.<sup>87</sup> Modernism as such, A.J.H.W. Brandt argued, was too difficult for ‘pagans’ to comprehend. To convey liberal Protestant principles, a missionary should therefore not weary his target audience with historical-critical interpretations of biblical stories. The Gospel narratives about Jesus’s crucifixion and ascendance could be told point blank, as they formed an ideal frame “to educate children in harmony with the spirit of Christianity and to underpin their faith in the eternal value of the life of their souls.”<sup>88</sup> Brandt was not afraid that this rather ‘orthodox’ approach would cause ‘pagan’ converts to Christianity to lose their Christian faith altogether once they reached intellectual ‘maturity’. After all, he rhetorically asked, had modernists themselves lost their faith after recognising that biblical stories should not be interpreted in a supernaturalist way? Introducing non-Christians to biblical imagery was just the first phase of missionary work. While an orthodox missionary stopped after that phase, taking the words of Scripture to be truths of faith, a modernist missionary would just be beginning with the second phase of his work, in which he would teach indigenes to distinguish between the ‘mythological’ form and actual meaning of biblical texts. With the right guidance, those indigenes could in due course make the transition from a ‘childlike’ orthodox to an ‘intellectually mature’ liberal interpretation of Christianity.<sup>89</sup>

Liberal Protestant discourse, as analysed in chapter 6, is clearly implied in Brandt’s words. Indicative is his use of the word ‘children’, with which he did not refer to non-Christians of a young age, but to non-Christians in general; the latter were, intellectually, still in an ‘infant stage’. As Joustra believed, indigenes could not reach a higher stage of development on their

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<sup>84</sup> “...een grootere kracht is tot zaligheid...” Quoted from: C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘De vrijzinnigen en de zending’, *Ibid.* 1905-30 (29 July 1905), 235-236, there 236.

<sup>85</sup> [J.N. Wiersma in:] ‘De vergadering van modernen, gehouden te Amsterdam op 6 en 7 April 1875’, *Ibid.* 1875-16 (22 April 1875), 1; Boone, ‘Moderne zendelingen 1850-1885’, 36.

<sup>86</sup> Explicitly put forward in: J.C. Schagen van Soelen, *Oost-Indiën en de zending. Twee voordrachten* (Amsterdam 1886), 32. Schagen van Soelen argued that the a missionary should have a bourgeois background, in order to make sure that he would exert a beneficial influence on indigenes. See: J.C. Schagen van Soelen, ‘Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. protest. Missions-Verein en de zending’, *De Hervorming* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 85-87, there 86.

<sup>87</sup> Balsem, ‘De zending en de moderne richting’, 171.

<sup>88</sup> “...om kinderen naar den geest op te voeden en te bevestigen in het geloof aan de oneindige waarde van het leven hunner ziel.” Quoted from: A.J.H.W. Brandt, ‘Zending’, *De Hervorming* 1883-34 (25 August 1883), 134.

<sup>89</sup> A.J.H.W. Brandt, ‘Zending’, *Ibid.* 1883-32 (11 August 1883), 126; *Ibid.* 1883-34 (25 August 1883), 134.

own, because they were simply not aware of their lack of cultivation.<sup>90</sup> Foreign mission brought them into contact with someone who was spiritually more developed than they were. Being an ambassador of Christian civilisation, in many cases even the first Westerner with whom indigenes came into contact, a missionary was a ‘spiritual aristocrat’.<sup>91</sup> His education should, in the first place, be *illustrative* in a literal sense: he should act as a ‘tutor’, on whom indigenes could pattern their own lives.<sup>92</sup> As in social work ‘at home’, personal ‘tutorage’ from a ‘spiritual aristocrat’, a paragon of erudition, devoutness and cultural refinement, was seen as the key to spreading civilisation.

Not all non-Christians were regarded as equally ‘under-developed’ in a spiritual sense. As said, with Christianity standing at the top, religions on which cultures with a certain stratification and complexity were based were considered to be higher on the ‘ladder’ of civilisation than nature worship. In Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim societies, there was a clear distinction between an intellectual, learned elite and an unlettered, superstitious ‘herd’ that was absent in the more ‘primitive’ societies of inland Asia and Africa. Some modernists deemed it unnecessary to set up missionary activities in the first-mentioned societies at all,<sup>93</sup> or advised to do missionary work among Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims only if their level of morality was demonstrably low – hence only among the ‘common herd’.<sup>94</sup> Others advocated the exact opposite approach, to which the German *Allgemeine evangelisch-protestantische Missionsverein* (General Protestant Mission Society or AEP MV) gave shape. This organisation, founded in 1884 and dealt with in more detail in chapter 11, wanted to conduct foreign mission only among the ‘*cultuurvolkeren*’ in East Asia, and only among the intellectual elite of those peoples. The idea behind this approach was that ideas and principles penetrate into society at large from top to bottom.<sup>95</sup> India, China and Japan provided Christianity with fertile ground to fall on. Because the peoples living in these countries had immanent instead of transcendent conceptions of God, they were believed to be receptive to Christianity only in its antisupernaturalist, liberal Protestant form.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, corresponding to their position on the ladder of civilisation, they would never unquestioningly accept Christianity as a philosophy of life replacing their own religions. Missionaries should therefore look for ‘elements of truth’ in those religions to which liberal Protestantism could be linked up, and to treat liberal Christianity as the culmination in which those ‘elements of truth’ found their ultimate fulfilment.<sup>97</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Joustra, *De beteekenis der zending*, 24.

<sup>91</sup> Foreign mission enabled Muslims and pagans to come into contact with individuals of a higher moral standing. See: C. Hille Ris Lambers, ‘Ingezonden stukken – Zending’, *De Hervorming* 1910-47 (19 November 1910), 374.

<sup>92</sup> The notion of ‘tutorage’ and the idea that pagans were trapped in a low stage of development could clearly be heard in sentences such as the following: ‘If they are guided correctly, something good can be made of this population [living in the East Indies].’ (“*Onder goede leiding is van die bevolking [in Indië] nog wat goeds te maken.*”) Quoted from: J.A. Beijerman, ‘Het Nederlandsche Zendelinggenootschap’, *Ibid.* 1890-33 (16 August 1890), 129-130, there 130.

<sup>93</sup> E.g.: H.W.Ph.E. van den Bergh van Eysinga, ‘De zending in het licht van het Congres van Chicago’, *Ibid.* 1894-31 (4 August 1894), 121-122; 1894-32 (11 August 1894), 125-126.

<sup>94</sup> M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Van overzee’, *Ibid.* 1910-48 (26 November 1910), 377-378, there 378.

<sup>95</sup> J.C. Schagen van Soelen, ‘Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending’, *Ibid.* 1886-21 (22 May 1886), 81-83, there 81.

<sup>96</sup> J.N. Wiersma, ‘De roeping der modernen’, *Ibid.* 1881-36 (16 September 1881), 145-146, there 145. [This issue is erroneously numbered as ‘1881-37’.]

<sup>97</sup> ‘Buitenland – De Algemeene Evang. Prot. Zendingsvereniging in Duitschland’, *Ibid.* 1885-06 (7 February 1885), 23; J.C. Schagen van Soelen, ‘Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending’, *Ibid.* 1886-22 (29

Lecturing on the AEPMV at the 1886 meeting of modern theologians, J.C. Schagen van Soelen (1835-1903), who had worked as a minister in several congregations of the Protestant Church in the East Indies between 1864 and 1885, expressed that the rationale behind the AEPMV's approach to foreign mission was unfounded. He called history to witness. In late Antiquity, Christianity first became a powerful force among the masses, eventually leaving the imperial authorities in Rome no other choice than to embrace it themselves. In addition, more-developed Asians would come into contact with Christianity anyway, as a result of ever-growing international intellectual and mercantile traffic.<sup>98</sup> What is more, Schagen van Soelen feared that the missionary strategy of the AEPMV would alienate the less developed masses in non-Christian societies from the more educated elites, thereby frustrating "a healthy social development, which the AEPMV paradoxically tried to foster and which is necessary for Christianity to take root." The social law of interaction between the different classes in a society was completely ignored.<sup>99</sup>

Wiersma was less sceptical.<sup>100</sup> From personal experience, he could testify that only after members of what he called the "indigenous aristocracy" – upper-caste Brahmans in British India and native chieftains in the Dutch East Indies – had shown to be susceptible to Christianity, the rest of the indigenous population became eager to do the same.<sup>101</sup> J. Knappert, on the other hand, was highly critical. Factional division in Protestant church life should not be projected upon foreign mission, he felt, but that was exactly what happened by founding a separate modernist missionary association. Modernists should not be motivated by the desire to spread their principles among non-Christians; their only drive should be to turn the latter into Christians.<sup>102</sup> This last statement troubled M.A.N. Rovers. In his eyes, foreign mission should be satisfied with permeating indigenous peoples with a Christian *spirit*, without urging indigenes to actually go over to Christianity – that is, without being baptised, without identifying as 'Christians', or attending church. Rovers used the Brahmo Samaj to make his point: as said in chapter 5, this religious reform movement was inspired by (liberal) Christianity, but did not want Indians to forswear their Hindu identity. If the Brahmo Samaj had radically distanced

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May 1886), 85-87, there 86; M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – De zending', *Ibid.* 1923-41 (13 October 1923), 321-323, there 322. Wiersma praised the AEPMV for working among the more civilised peoples in East Asia, whom other missionary societies ignored. See: J.N. Wiersma, 'De zending in het licht van het Congres te Chicago', *Ibid.* 1894-33 (18 August 1894), 130. The idea that Christianity fulfilled all other religions could be found not only among modernists.

<sup>98</sup> [J.C. Schagen van Soelen in:] 'Binnenland – Vergadering der moderne theologen', *Ibid.* 1886-17 (24 April 1886), 67. Schagen van Soelen's lecture was published, together with another speech he had given at a meeting of the NPB branch in Deventer in December 1885, as a brochure: Schagen van Soelen, *Oost-Indiën en de zending*, 33-64. See also: 'Oost-Indië en de zending', *De Protestant* IV.28 (10 July 1886), 2-3.

<sup>99</sup> "...en [zal] aldus gezonde volksoontwikkeling, die immers juist beoogt [sic] werd, die ook zoo nodig is voor de jonge planting des Christendoms, onmogelijk worden?" Quoted from: J.C. Schagen van Soelen, 'Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending', *De Hervorming* 1886-21 (22 May 1886), 81-83, there 83. See also: Schagen van Soelen, *Oost-Indiën en de zending*, 51.

<sup>100</sup> Though he did feel that the AEPMV was 'too German' to be an attractive alternative to the NZG for liberal Protestants in the Netherlands. See: [J.N. Wiersma in:] 'Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenvereeniging', *De Hervorming* 1888-21 (26 May 1888), 83; [J.N. Wiersma in:] 'Binnenland – Alkmaarsche Predikantenvereeniging', *Ibid.* 1888-33 (18 August 1888), 130-131, there 130. See also: 'De nieuwe zendingsvereeniging', *De Protestant* III.7 (14 February 1885), 2.

<sup>101</sup> "...Indische aristocratie..." Quoted from: [J.N. Wiersma in:] 'Binnenland – Zending', *De Hervorming* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 86-87, there 86.

<sup>102</sup> [J. Knappert in:] 'Binnenland – Zending', *Ibid.* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 86-87, there 86.

itself from Hinduism, then it would have never been able to influence Indian society to the same extent as it currently did. Was it not enough, and even better for modernists, Rovers asked, to support movements such as this one without engaging in foreign mission themselves?<sup>103</sup>

## 5. The NPB in the Dutch East Indies

The abovementioned arguments used in the discussion on foreign mission did not change over time. Yet, as of the 1900s, three developments caused the discussion to get a new focus. First, even the most ardent modernist champions of the NZG had to admit in the early twentieth century that it was hard for modernists to sympathise with this missionary association. At that time, the NZG got into serious financial difficulties, which it tried to solve by seeking more support in orthodox circles and even by seeking forms of collaboration with the exclusively orthodox missionary societies that had seceded from it in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>104</sup> To anticipate a successful outcome of those attempts, modernists who were in favour of foreign mission had to think of a potential alternative to the NZG. Second, the general feeling of marginalisation manifesting itself in modernist circles in the early twentieth century broadened the discussion on foreign mission, concentrated on modernists' involvement with the NZG, into a more general discussion on modernists' presence in the Dutch East Indies. Noticing that their influence in social life in the Netherlands was not as big as they hoped it would be, modernists came to see that the situation in colonial life in the East Indies was similar. No modernist voices could be heard there, which was due, in modernists' perception, to religious indifference in the ethnically Dutch and Indo-European communities, and to strong orthodox tendencies in the colonial Protestant Church.<sup>105</sup> As a result, a sense of urgency to become more active in the East Indies made itself felt among modernists. Third, the discussion on foreign mission was pushed into a new direction due to the gradually declining role of the NPB in the modernist movement. With the VVH and, later, the CC taking over some of the tasks it had previously fulfilled or tasks it could fulfil, the NPB had to reconsider what it wanted to be and what it could still do. The East Indies provided it with a potential new field of activity and hence with a new reason to exist. Moreover, if it

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<sup>103</sup> [M.A.N. Rovers in:] 'Binnenland – Zending', *Ibid.* 1886-22 (29 May 1886), 86-87, there 87.

<sup>104</sup> 'Binnenland – Nederlandsch Zendelinggenootschap', *Leeuwarder Courant* CLI.15 (14 August 1902), 2; J.N. Wiersma, 'Nederlandsch Zendeling Genootschap', *De Hervorming* 1902-28 (12 July 1902), 218-219, there 219; J.N. Wiersma, 'Het Nederl. Zendeling-Genootschap', *Ibid.* 1902-51 (20 December 1902), 402-403, there 402; Cyriacus [B.W. Colenbrander], 'Uit de kerkelijke wereld', *Ibid.* 1903-24 (13 June 1903), 188-189, there 189.

<sup>105</sup> E.g.: J. de Jong, 'Van Salatiga', *Ibid.* 1883-31 (4 August 1883), 121-122, there 122; J. de Jong, 'Binnenland – Oost-Indische toestanden op kerkelijk gebied', *Ibid.* 1884-05 (2 February 1884), 19; 1884-08 (23 February 1884), 33; V.d.Z., 'De minister Keuchenius, de Indische Kerk en de Synodale Commissie', *Ibid.* 1889-31 (3 August 1889), 122; C. Rogge, 'De Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië', *Ibid.* 1891-39 (26 September 1891), 155-156, there 155; X., 'Brieven van een hulpprediker in N.-Indië', *Ibid.* 1893-14 (8 April 1893), 54; 'Binnenland – Uit Salatiga', *Ibid.* 1895-06 (9 February 1895), 23-24, there 23; Delius, 'Uit Ned. Indië', *Ibid.* 1906-09 (3 March 1906), 67-68, there 67; A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – De Indische Commissie', *Ibid.* 1910-10 (5 March 1910), 73; A.S. Carpentier Altling, '"De Protestantsche Kerk in Ned. Oost-Indië"', *Ibid.* 1911-41 (14 October 1911), 322-323, there 322; 'Berichten, enz. – Over vrijzinnige predikanten in Indië', *Ibid.* 1913-36 (6 September 1913), 284-285; [A. Rutgers van der Loeff in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Te Alkmaar', *Ibid.* 1913-45 (8 November 1913), 357-358, there 357; S. Bartstra, 'Een dominés dienstreis in Ned. Indië', *Teekenen des Tijds* XV (1913), 37-57, there 45; E.M. van Kerkrade, 'Hoofdartikelen – Schetsen uit den Oost', *Ibid.* 1917-51 (22 December 1917), 424-425, there 424; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Verscheidenheden en mededeelingen – Een paar vragen', *Ibid.* 1919-41 (11 October 1941), 185; 'Kerknieuws – Vrijzinnigen en Indië', *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* LXXXIII.244 (3 September 1926), evening paper A, 2; F. Pont, 'Binnenland – Dr. L.J. van Holk's smaadreunen over den Indischen predikantenstand en de Indische Kerk', *De Hervorming* 1930-01 (4 January 1930), 3-4, there 3.

would indeed seize that opportunity, the NPB might become an alternative to the NZG and could make modernists better heard in colonial life.

Several steps were taken to give the NPB a foothold in the Dutch East Indies. In 1905, an NPB branch was founded in Batavia.<sup>106</sup> In 1906, A.S. Carpentier Alting held a lecture at the annual meeting of modern theologians in Amsterdam, in which he argued that materialism and confessionalism were just as big a threat to the free development of religious life in the East Indies as they were in the Netherlands, and that the NPB accordingly had a duty to act.<sup>107</sup> In 1907, at his suggestion,<sup>108</sup> an *Indische Commissie* (Commission for the East Indies) was installed during the annual NPB assembly.<sup>109</sup> The only concrete task it was given at the assembly was to interest Dutch modernist ministers and teachers of religion in going to the East Indies, initially to work among “less well-off Europeans and low-rank militaries.”<sup>110</sup> The question remained as to whether the commission should be given other tasks as well, and whether one of those tasks ought to be the organisation of foreign mission among Indonesian indigenes under the banner of the NPB. Several weeks before the 1908 general assembly, the NPB executive board proposed to charge the commission with this latter task indeed.<sup>111</sup> Yet, at the assembly, the objections to foreign mission in modernist circles proved to be still too strong; the word ‘mission’ in the board’s proposal was therefore substituted with the less specific term ‘activities’. This amended proposal was accepted,<sup>112</sup> but no attempts were made afterwards to make concrete what those ‘activities’ could be; the commission probably feared that *any* activity among non-Christians would be rejected as a form of foreign mission. The accepted amended proposal thus remained a dead letter in practice. As the commission did not manage to enthuse any minister or teacher of religion, its range of duties was limited to the distribution of brochures to the East Indies on request, referred to as ‘*postpropaganda*’ (‘propaganda by mail’).<sup>113</sup>

M. Joustra, however, again raised the question of whether the Commission for the East Indies should do something for the benefit of indigenes in 1925.<sup>114</sup> He brought to modernists’

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<sup>106</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Uit Batavia’, *Ibid.* 1905-01 (7 January 1905), 5; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – Het verslag’, *Ibid.* 1905-39 (30 September 1905), 308. The history of the NPB branch in Batavia is dealt with in appendix C.

<sup>107</sup> Carpentier Alting’s lecture was integrally published in: A.S. Carpentier Alting, ‘Een groot belang ook voor de Nederlandsch-Indische samenleving is, dat onze beginselen aldaar meer tot invloed komen’, appendix to *Ibid.* 1906-21 (26 May 1906), 18-21.

<sup>108</sup> C.R. Bakhuizen van den Brink, ‘Levensbericht van Albertus Samuel Carpentier Alting’, in: *Handelingen en mededeelingen van de Maatschappij der Nederlandsche Letterkunde te Leiden, over het jaar 1915-1916* II (Leiden 1916), 105-133, there 126.

<sup>109</sup> Consequently, the general objective of the *Protestantenbond* was changed into: ‘the advancement of the free development of religious life, both within and outside of the circle of churches, in the Netherlands and the Dutch colonies.’ See: ‘Binnenlandsch nieuws – Nederlandsche Protestantenvond’, *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1907-11605 (25 October 1907), 5; *Handelingen NPB* 1907, 10.

<sup>110</sup> “...min gegoede Europeanen en [...] mindere militairen...” Quoted from: [A.S. Carpentier Alting in:] *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>111</sup> ‘Nederlandsche Protestantenvond – Hoofdbestuur’, *De Hervorming* 1908-36 (5 September 1908), 281-282, there 281; *Handelingen NPB* 1908, 11.

<sup>112</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz. – De Protestantenvond en de zending’, *De Hervorming* 1908-37 (12 September 1908), 292; *Handelingen NPB* 1908, 33-35. Yet, the original proposal gained applause as well. M.H. Schippers could see no reason why modernist ministers should not be allowed to simultaneously work among natives and non-natives. See: [M.H. Schippers in:] *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> *Handelingen NPB* 1914, 4-5.

<sup>114</sup> M. Joustra, ‘De bond en Indië – Kunnen wij iets voor Indië doen?’, *De Hervorming* 1925-06 (7 February 1925), 43-45; M. Joustra, “*Steekt af naar de diepte*”. *Een roepstem uitgaande van de Indische Commissie van den Nederland-*

attention that the *Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap* (Dutch Bible Society) had sent moderately orthodox theologian H. Kraemer (1888-1965) to the East Indies to get in touch with the spiritually most highly developed Javanese and to study what was going on in their circles. That way, Kraemer could inform missionaries about changes in the indigenous culture and could introduce those Indonesians to a culture that was ‘spiritually higher’ than their own. Just as the initiators of the organisations mentioned in chapter 9, Joustra suggested following orthodoxy’s example. A modernist ‘Kraemer’ should be enabled to live in “a centre of indigenous spiritual and intellectual life” and should try, by mingling among the spiritually most highly developed indigenes, corresponding with them, giving lectures, and making use of the press, “not to convert intellectual Indonesia, but to inform it about, and bring it into the sphere of influence of our liberal Christianity.”<sup>115</sup> The rationale behind this was the same as the rationale behind the missionary methodology of the AEPMV and the editorial reform of *De Hervorming* effectuated in January 1918: by targeting the intellectual ‘elite’, modernist ideas and ideals could hopefully ultimately penetrate into society at large. Joustra’s suggestion was not adopted. Yet, the Commission for the East Indies did intensify its efforts to spread liberal Protestant principles within the Dutch colonial community. In 1929, it assisted several Dutchmen in the East Indies, who sought to strengthen their bonds with liberal Protestants in the Netherlands and with other liberal Protestants in the East Indies, in founding the ‘*Groep van vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen in Nederlandsch-Indië*’ (‘Group of Religious Liberals in the Dutch East Indies’) in 1929.<sup>116</sup> This group was intended to function as an Indonesian equivalent to the NPB and was integrated as a separate entity within the CC in 1932.<sup>117</sup> In order to support it more effectively than the Commission for the East Indies could do, the executive board of the NPB decided to disband the commission in 1933 and to coordinate matters related to the East Indies itself.<sup>118</sup>

## 6. The Modernist Movement and Foreign Mission: An Evaluation

In 1925, to return to the case with which this chapter started, C.B. Burger reflected upon the relationship between liberal Protestantism and foreign mission. Burger did not merely observe that the two had always been ‘difficult’ to combine; he also set forth two reasons that explained why this was so. The first of these reasons was a fundamental one. Right after the NZG had

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*schen Protestantenvond voor ons werk in Indië* (Leiden 1925). A review was published in: [A.E.F. Junod], ‘Boekbespreking – “Steekt af naar de diepte”’, *De Hervorming* 1926-07 (13 February 1926), 53.

<sup>115</sup> “...een centrum van inlandsch geestelijk en intellectueel leven...”; “Immers zou ons hoofddoel moeten zijn intellectueel Indonesië – niet te bekeeren tot, maar – inzicht te geven in en brengen onder den invloed van ons vrijzinnig christendom.” Quoted from: Joustra, “Steekt af naar de diepte”, 9, 11.

<sup>116</sup> The genesis of the Group of Religious Liberals in the Dutch East Indies and the involvement of the NPB with its founding is briefly mentioned in: ‘School en Kerk – Vrijzinnig godsdienstigen’, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* XLV.135 (17 May 1929), 6. See also: ‘Overzicht over den arbeid der Centrale Commissie van 1923-1937’, 46-50, 70.

<sup>117</sup> ‘Kerknieuws – Vergadering van de Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme’, *Het Vaderland* (18 May 1932), evening paper C, 3.

<sup>118</sup> S. Spaans, ‘Bondsnieuws – Hoofdbestuur’, *De Hervorming* 1933-01 (19 January 1933), 6. In the late 1930s, no less than three commissions were dealing with the tasks that the former Commission for the East Indies used to perform: the *postpropaganda* in the East Indies was included in the framework of the general NPB post office mission; the *Commissie voor de uitzending van vrijzinnige predikanten naar Indië* (Commission for the Sending of Liberal Ministers to the East Indies) tried to pastorally take care for non-natives by sending modernist ministers to the East Indies; and, ultimately, the *Vrijzinnig-protestantsche stichting voor medische hulp in Nederlandsch-Indië* (Liberal Protestant Foundation for Medical Aid in the Dutch East Indies) was responsible for the maintenance of a sanatorium, intended to give medical assistance to diseased indigenes, in the East Indies. The latter two commissions worked on behalf of the CC. See: *Doel en werk van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond*, 20-24.

experienced an exodus of orthodox Protestants in the late 1850s due to its perceived tolerance to modern theology, the comparative study of religion began to take off in modernist circles. In Burger's view, studying Christianity as one religion among many, instead of as the exclusive source of divine revelation, nourished the thought "that every religion had much that was good, and that non-Christians ought not to be deprived of the religions they adhered to, for it was impossible to ascertain whether Christianity truly was a higher form of religion."<sup>119</sup> As demonstrated in this chapter, Burger exaggerated a bit here; the earliest modernists still believed that Christianity was intellectually and morally superior, equating it with the highest level of civilisation and humanity. Yet, it is true that they unlinked salvation from belief in Jesus Christ as redeemer, and stated that the principles of Jesus, which they argued Christianity was all about, were not confined to what was historically identified as 'Christianity'. In other words, it was not necessary to forsake one's non-Christian faith in order to become a 'Christian', to become a true human in accordance with the principles of Jesus. In consequence, the opinion that foreign mission was something to be left to orthodoxy, because the latter's dogmas were easier to get across to uncultured and uneducated indigenes or because missionary activities as such were seen as an infringement to the free development of religious life, even took root in the modernist movement.<sup>120</sup> This may seem remarkable – after all, precisely because modernism lacked specific doctrines, its earliest adherents tended to see it as the only form of Christianity that could develop into the universal religion of mankind, for the emergence of which hope continued to be cherished in modernist circles until well into the twentieth century.<sup>121</sup> What is more, if playing down the absoluteness of Christianity could sufficiently explain modernists' lack of enthusiasm for foreign mission, one would expect that their involvement in missionary activities would have increased at the beginning of the twentieth century, when malcontentism and right-wing modernism caused the uniqueness of Christianity to be played down less in modernist circles. But such an increase did not occur.

The fact that, in spite of the hope for a universal religion and changes in modern theology, modernists' involvement in foreign mission was low in the last decades of the nineteenth century and continued to be low afterwards had to do with the second, pragmatic reason Burger mentioned. In response to the founding of missionary societies on an explicitly orthodox basis, the NZG tried to win back orthodox Protestants' sympathy by keeping the modernist movement more at distance. As particularly the case of J.N. Wiersma exemplified, the position of the very few missionaries with modernist sympathies in the NZG was controversial to say the least. The willingness to support the NZG was accordingly not very high among modernists; why would they contribute to an association that did not want to involve them too closely in its activities and hence only worked in favour of orthodoxy?<sup>122</sup> Founding a missionary association on a

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<sup>119</sup> "...dat iedere godsdienst toch zoo veel goeds had dat men aan een ander deze niet mocht ontnemen omdat men niet kon weten of het Christendom wel waarlijk een hoogere vorm van godsdienst beteekende." Quoted from: [C.B. Burger in:] 'Geestelijk leven – De vrijzinnigen en de zending', *De Telegraaf* XXXIII.12493 (8 July 1925), 12.

<sup>120</sup> Still in the 1920s, this opinion could be heard. See, e.g.: 'Kerknieuws – Het oude dilemma', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXI.61 (1 March 1924), morning paper B, 2.

<sup>121</sup> Exemplary in this respect is the lecture on foreign mission S. Hoekstra gave at the meeting of modern theologians in 1866. See: Herderscheê, *De modern-godsdienstige richting in Nederland*, 380; Boone, "In het belang van zedelijkheid en recht", 92.

<sup>122</sup> Still in the 1920s, this sentiment was strong. See, e.g.: 'Kerknieuws – Het oude dilemma', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXI.61 (1 March 1924), morning paper B, 2; [C.B. Burger in:] 'Geestelijk leven – De vrijzinnigen en de

theologically liberal basis, as was done in Germany in 1884, was not considered to be within the bounds of possibility. Not only were the fundamental objections against the whole concept of foreign mission too big among modernists for such an association to come into being; there was no widely shared, concrete answer given to the question of how foreign mission on a liberal basis should be organised in the first place.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, modernists could simply not afford to actively engage in foreign mission, as they had to apply all of their strength and resources to defend their own position in *Dutch* society and church life against Christian orthodoxy.<sup>124</sup> The editor of the ecclesial affairs section in the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* stingingly argued in 1924 that they had manoeuvred themselves into this unenviable situation: both in the Dutch Reformed Church and in the NZG, modernists had allowed orthodoxy to gain the upper hand.<sup>125</sup> Their position had become so precarious that fighting a two-front battle was not an option: spending time and money on a missionary front would inevitably be at the expense of their attempt to counteract their marginalisation on the home front. Contrary to the modernist-based organisations mentioned in the previous chapter, an exclusively liberal Protestant missionary association therefore never came into being.

However, the feeling of marginalisation that led to calls for modernist-based schools and a concentration of modernist forces within liberal political parties, as well as to the founding of liberal Protestant youth organisations and the VPRO, did induce Dutch liberal Protestants to intensify their concern with the Dutch East Indies. Spreading liberal Protestantism among Indonesian indigenes might not be possible, but defending it within the ethnically Dutch community living in the East Indies had become just as necessary as defending it in the Netherlands. Modernists perceived much religious indifference among their countrymen in the largest Dutch colony and became increasingly worried about the influence of orthodoxy in the colonial Protestant Church. As a result, after A.S. Carpentier Alting managed to create a sense of urgency to counteract these developments in colonial life at the meeting of modern theologians in 1906, the NPB installed a commission intended to send liberal Protestant reading, ministers and teachers of religion to the East Indies in 1907. Because the Protestant Church did not generate much enthusiasm in modernist circles – it was not only dominated by orthodoxy, but it was also interdenominational, which was at odds with the ‘ecclesial turn’ and the related accentuation of denominational differences in the early-twentieth century modernist movement<sup>126</sup> –, this

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zending’, *De Telegraaf* XXXIII.12493 (8 July 1925), 12; ‘Kerknieuws – Vrijzinnigen en Indië’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIII.244 (3 September 1926), evening paper A, 2.

<sup>123</sup> ‘Geestelijk leven – Vrijzinnigen en Indië’, *De Indische Courant* VI.20 (8 October 1926), 6.

<sup>124</sup> ‘Kerknieuws – Vrijzinnigen en Indië’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIII.244 (3 September 1926), evening paper A, 2.

<sup>125</sup> ‘Kerknieuws – Het oude dilemma’, *Ibid.* LXXXI.61 (1 March 1924), morning paper B, 2.

<sup>126</sup> In Dutch Mennonite circles, for example, the initiative was taken to investigate whether Mennonites in the Dutch East Indies could be organised separately. To that end, minister H. Britzel was sent to the East Indies in 1914. Separate Mennonite groups were indeed created there, causing some controversy in NPB circles. See: ‘Berichten, enz. – Doopsgezinden in O.-Indië’, *De Hervorming* 1913-46 (15 November 1913), 369; [H. Britzel in:] ‘Een woord tot de doopsgezinden op Java’, *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad* XXIX.145 (27 May 1914), 5-6; [H. Britzel in:] ‘Redactioneel – De Protestantische Kerk op Java’, *De Hervorming* 1914-47 (21 November 1914), 402; ‘Kerknieuws – Doopsgezinden in Indië’, *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXI.326 (24 November 1914), morning paper A, 2; H. Britzel, *Mijn Indische reis in 1914 of Naar de doopsgezinden op Java* (Wormerveer 1916); E.M. van Kerkrade, ‘Hoofdartikelen – Schetsen uit den Oost’, *De Hervorming* 1917-51 (22 December 1917), 424-425; 1917-52 (29 December 1917), 437-438. An additional reason for modernist ministers not to go the East Indies was that their chances of getting an



commission failed to set in motion an influx of modernist-minded ministers and teachers of religion in colonial church life. It was further hindered in realising its aims due to the First World War, which severely hampered communication between the Netherlands and the East Indies in the mid-1910s.<sup>127</sup> When the feeling of marginalisation in modernist circles reached a peak in the 1920s, it was therefore decided to organise modernist-minded Dutchmen and Dutchwomen in the East Indies more tightly *outside* of the Protestant Church. That way, modernists in the East Indies should ultimately become capable of defending their interests themselves, allowing for activities in defence of liberal Protestantism to be organised on the spot instead of directed from the Netherlands, and for the commission for the East Indies of the NPB to have merely a supporting instead of leading role. With the assistance of the latter, the NPB-like Group of Religious Liberals in the Dutch East Indies was formed in 1929. The separate representation it got in the CC expressed its independence vis-à-vis the NPB.

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appointment in the Protestant Church were minimal. See: 'Berichten, enz. – "Over vrijzinnige predikanten in Indië"', *Ibid.* 1913-37 (13 September 1913), 292.

<sup>127</sup> Mentioned in: A. Rutgers van der Loeff, 'Verslag van de Indische Commissie van den Ned. Protestantenvond', in: *Jaarboek NPB 1918*, 88; *Jaarboek NPB 1919*, 112-113, there 112; *Jaarboek NPB 1920*, 116-117, there 116.

## 11. THE INTERNATIONAL LIBERAL PROTESTANT ‘FAMILY’

### 1. “A Grand Global Movement”

In July 1922, K.H. Roessingh wrote an article in *De Hervorming* titled ‘*Modernisme en internationalisme*’ (‘Modernism and Internationalism’). He lamented that at the time, “Dutch modernism in general develops rather isolatedly – it does not know and does not feel that it is part of a grand global movement.” In the early 1920s, Dutch modernists did not seem to care about the difficulties with which like-minded groups abroad had to cope, and failed to recognise that they could infuse their movement with new vigour if they would strengthen the bonds with these groups. Corresponding with a general trend among then modernist opinion leaders, particularly addressed in relation to the founding of modernist-based organisations in chapter 9, Roessingh urged his fellow modernists to follow orthodox Protestants’ example: the latter were more aware of fighting for the same cause as co-religionists in other countries and were much better organised at the international level. Yet, a feeling of togetherness with liberal Protestants abroad, he noticed, had not always been absent in Dutch modernist circles:

When I was leafing through about forty old volumes of *De Hervorming* some time ago, it struck me that back then [...], the reader was excellently informed about religious and ecclesial life abroad [...]. This information was not confined to some anecdotal particularities, to the *chronique scandaleuse* of Christianity and church, but [*De Hervorming*] tried to give a good and clear impression of the inner and outward development of liberal-religious life across the borders in regularly published articles.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, before the drastic editorial U-turn in 1918, *De Hervorming* had had a separate section devoted to occurrences affecting liberal Protestantism outside of the Netherlands. In a follow-up article published a week later, Roessingh mentioned a second example indicating that the solidarity with foreign modernists had once been stronger: in the 1900s and early 1910s, several conferences had been held in Boston and a handful of large European cities, including Amsterdam, during which religious liberals from different countries and with various religious backgrounds had discussed with each other what was going on in theology, church life and society in their respective countries.<sup>2</sup> Roessingh forgot to bring up a third example: prior to the first international modernist conference, the NPB had welcomed representatives of foreign leagues of liberal Protestants at its annual assemblies many times, and had frequently sent representatives of its own to the annual assemblies of these leagues as well. As an association defending modernist interests, the NPB was not one-of-a-kind. In fact, it was the Dutch link in an international network of NPB-like associations, founded in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “...dat het Nederlandsche modernisme over het algemeen genomen zoo geïsoleerd voortleeft, zich zoo weinig onderdeel weet en voelt van een groote wereldbeweging.”; “Toen ik eenigen tijd geleden een veertigtal oude jaargangen van “*De Hervorming*” doorkeek, trof het mij, hoe voortreffelijk de lezer van voorheen [...] op de hoogte werd gehouden van het godsdienstig en kerkelijk leven in het buitenland [...]. Die informatie bepaalde zich niet tot deze en gene anecdotische bijzonderheid, tot de *chronique scandaleuse* van Christendom en Kerk, maar men trachtte door geregelde artikelen een goeden en duidelijken indruk te geven van de innerlijke en uiterlijke ontwikkelings-geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig-godsdienstig leven over de grenzen.” Quoted from: K.H. Roessingh, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing—Modernisme en internationalisme’, *De Hervorming* 1922-27 (8 July 1922), 211-212, there 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 1922-28 (15 July 1922), 219-220, there 219.

<sup>3</sup> Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’, 55-57.

Hinting at modernists' initiatives to counteract their marginalisation, the rise of right-wing modernism, and the intensified denominational awareness in modernist circles, Roessingh acknowledged that there were "enough interesting things going on and enough things to quarrel about at the ecclesial and religious level within the borders of our own country" due to which Dutch modernists had lost touch with their foreign allies in the last couple of years.<sup>4</sup> But a sense of international solidarity was not only lacking among Dutch modernists: liberal Protestants in other countries were, equally, less involved with their international contacts than they had been before. This, Roessingh explained, was a consequence of the First World War. Between 1914 and 1918, it had been impossible to keep in touch. Contacts had to be re-established from scratch. What complicated matters was that the war had led to tense relations between nations, which had repercussions on the relations between the nationally organised liberal Protestant communities. Before the outbreak of the war, liberal Protestants from both sides of the Atlantic had met each other at international conferences once every two to three years, but they had not been involved in joint activities in between.<sup>5</sup> Roessingh therefore incited liberal Protestants everywhere to organise theological collaboration, collective social initiatives and communal youth work with a permanent character.<sup>6</sup> To his delight, he noticed that his words had already set something in motion in 1923: "the awareness of being a global movement together is growing [among liberal Protestants from all across the globe]."<sup>7</sup> An organisation that served the latter's interests all year round would finally be established in 1930 under the name of 'International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom'.

The NPB and the Dutch modernist movement in general were embedded in the ecclesial, religious, social, political and cultural context of the Netherlands – a context that differed from that of other countries. It would go too far to list all the differences between the Dutch and other national contexts here, but, in relation to liberal Protestantism, one important difference needs to be accentuated. Not being an established church in a strict sense, the Dutch Reformed Church had a privileged position in the Netherlands in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

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<sup>4</sup> "...dat er binnen eigen grenzen niet genoeg interessants te beleven en niet genoeg te krakeelen zou zijn op kerkelijk en godsdienstig gebied..." Quoted from: K.H. Roessingh, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Modernisme en internationalisme', *De Hervorming* 1922-27 (8 July 1922), 211-212, there 211.

<sup>5</sup> In *Het Vaderland* of 14 February 1934, journalist J.J. Meyer stated to see this as the grand flaw of these conferences: "The pre-war international congresses of religious liberals [...] [did not coordinate joint activities]. [...] They looked like magnificent displays of fireworks, shiny soap bubbles of individualistic whims, for pre-war liberal Protestantism was individualistic. Leading personalities stepped into the limelight at these big congresses, but a firm organisation never came into being, and the international bonds became latent, as soon as the memory of the congresses, and the merrymaking and excursions that accompanied them, faded." (*De internationale congressen van 'Religious Liberalism' in het verleden [...] waren geen werk-congressen [...]. Zij geleken meer schitterende vuurwerken, glanzende zeepbellen van individualistische bevestigingen. Want voor den oorlog was het Vrijzinnig Protestantisme individualistisch. Persoonlijkheden van beteekenis traden op de grote congressen op den voorgrond, maar een organisatie werd niet gesticht, en de internationale verbindingen werden weer latent, zoodra de herinnering aan het congres, met zijn gezelligheden en sightseeing niet te vergeten, weer verbleekte.*) Quoted from: J.J. Meyer, 'Kerknieuws – De int. bijeenkomsten te Kopenhagen', *Het Vaderland* (14 February 1934), evening paper C, 2.

<sup>6</sup> K.H. Roessingh, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Modernisme en internationalisme', *De Hervorming* 1922-28 (15 July 1922), 219-220, there 219.

<sup>7</sup> "Toch groeit het besef, dat wij samen een wereldbeweging zijn..." Quoted from: K.H. Roessingh, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Eenheid en organisatie van het vrijzinnig protestantisme', *Ibid.* 1923-20 (19 May 1923), 154-156, there 155. This was the same lecture in which Roessingh famously chided modernists for their lack of organisation and with which he gave the initial impetus to the founding of the Central Commission for Liberal Protestantism.

It was closely intertwined with the secular power and set a profound stamp on Dutch culture.<sup>8</sup> Although church and state were constitutionally separated in 1796, the Dutch government continued to interfere in church life: through the department of Roman Catholic worship and the department of Reformed and other non-Catholic worship, it tried to reconfigure the ecclesial landscape – in which it partially succeeded: it managed to restructure the Dutch Reformed Church, the Lutheran Church and the Israelite community –, concerned itself with the appointment and training of church servants, and actively tried to stop the secession movement of the ‘*Afscheiding*’ from spreading within the Dutch Reformed Church in 1834 and subsequent years.<sup>9</sup> After the promulgation of a new constitution in 1848, the Dutch government no longer tried to influence internal church affairs.<sup>10</sup> The Dutch modernist movement could thus develop without direct state interference in ecclesial life. In the United Kingdom, the Scandinavian countries, the Swiss cantons, the German territories and, prior to 1905, also in France, by contrast, state interference in church life and even, to a certain extent, state involvement in doctrinal discussions was still standard practice after the first half of the nineteenth century. As Lindeboom shows in the third volume of *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, this deeply influenced the development of Protestant liberalism as a current in church life in those countries.<sup>11</sup>

While the Dutch modernist movement was confronted with specific national circumstances that differed from those in other countries, equivalent liberal Protestant movements existed elsewhere. As has been said, with the exception of the period between 1914 and the early 1920s, liberal Protestants invested in their relationship with like-minded groups outside of their own country. Moreover, in the United States and everywhere in industrialising Europe, liberal Protestants were confronted with orthodox agitation and with the consequences of ‘the social question’.

This chapter compares the history of the Dutch modernist movement to that of the foreign groups with which Dutch modernists were in contact. By so doing, it wants to analyse whether liberal Protestant movements outside of the Netherlands have developed along similar lines as the Dutch modernist movement. Particular attention is devoted to Germany and the United States. There are several reasons for this. As Roessingh wittily stressed what the first chapter, dealing with the roots of modernism, has indicated, “[Dutch modern] theology (and almost the same goes for English and American [modern theology]) is seventy-five per cent

<sup>8</sup> The privileged position of the Dutch Reformed Church and the consequences this had for Dutch society and culture in general are analysed in: J.I. Israel, *The Dutch Republic. Its Rise, Greatness and Fall, 1477-1806* (Oxford 1995), esp. 221-222, 361-398, 476, 637-676, 1019-1037.

<sup>9</sup> For a detailed account of the development and responsibilities of the departments of worship, see: A.E.M. Ribbink, ‘Departementen van Eredienst 1808-1870’, *Nederlands Archievenblad* XCVII.1 (1997), 297-306; W.P. Secker, ‘Het kommervolle bestaan van de departementen van Eredienst’, in: Van Baalen et al. (eds.), *God in de Nederlandse politiek*, 62-75; E. Bos, *Soevereiniteit en religie. Godsdienstvrijheid onder de eerste Oranjevorsten* (Hilversum 2009), 283-366.

<sup>10</sup> After 1848, the government continued to take some financial responsibilities for those religious communities that it considered to belong to the ‘existing church denominations’ referred to in the constitution of 1815: the Dutch Reformed Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Mennonite community, the Remonstrant Brotherhood, the Roman Catholic Church, the Old Catholic Church, the Dutch Israelite community and the Portuguese Israelite community. This regulation, known as the ‘*zilveren koorde*’ (‘silver cord’), was abolished in 1983. See: W.H. den Ouden, *De ontknoping van de zilveren koorde. De geschiedenis van de rijkstraktementen in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (Zoetermeer 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, esp. 107-108, 112, 125-126 (Germany); 140-143, 148 (France); 157 (Switzerland); 177 (Scandinavia); 182 (Hungary); 183 (Romania).

‘made in Germany’.<sup>12</sup> What is more, the NPB was modelled after a German example. A focus on the United States and specifically on Unitarianism is justified since the organisation and financing of the international conferences of religious liberals mostly depended on American Unitarians.<sup>13</sup> In addition, while theological ideas identified as ‘liberal’ also circulated in other church communities in the United States,<sup>14</sup> Unitarians were the only American church denomination that established relations with the NPB and similar European associations.<sup>15</sup>

While this chapter deals with Germany and the United States at greater length, there are three reasons to include other countries in the analysis as well. First, if parallels become apparent in the history of modernists in the Netherlands and those in Germany and the United States indeed, it can (and should) be questioned whether it is legitimate to claim that such a parallel development uncovers a universal *pattern* in the development of liberal Protestantism worldwide. To determine this, more material for comparison is needed. Second, in some countries, liberal Protestantism emerged only *after* the 1860s. If asynchronism did not account for a difference in development, the argument made in this study in reference to the Netherlands that the lack of accomplishments (vis-à-vis the ambitions and pretensions with which it announced itself) and appeal of the modernist movement stemmed in large part from factors *intrinsic* to liberal Protestantism itself, would be reinforced. Third, Dutch modernists not only had contacts with coreligionists in Germany and the United States. Their ties with liberal Protestants in some other countries were even closer. For instance, through the *réunion wallonne*, the assembly of Walloon Reformed congregations within the Dutch Reformed Church, there was a strong link between the Dutch modernist movement and liberal Protestantism in Francophone Europe.<sup>16</sup> In Hungary and South Africa, the theologians who were the first to organise liberal Protestants had been trained at Leiden University. In addition, the NPB was not the only organisation of liberal Protestants modelled after a German

<sup>12</sup> “...dat onze theologie (en voor de Engelsche en Amerikaansche geldt vrijwel hetzelfde) voor drie kwart is ‘made in Germany’.” Quoted from: K.H. Roessingh, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Modernisme en internationalisme’, *De Hervorming* 1922-27 (8 July 1922), 211-212, there 211. Dorrien confirms this in: G.J. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology I. Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900* (Louisville and London 2001), xvi, 403-404.

<sup>13</sup> H. de Lang, ‘De Unitariërs’, *De Hervorming* 1903-31 (1 August 1903), 241-242, there 241; ‘Nog iets over de Unitariërs’, *Ibid.* 1903-34 (22 August 1903), 265-266, there 265; K.H. Roessingh, ‘Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Internationale vrijzinnig-godsdienstige organisatie’, *Ibid.* 1923-03 (20 January 1923), 18-19, there 19; K.H. Roessingh, ‘Het internationaal vrijzinnig congres’, *Ibid.* 1925-23 (6 June 1925), 179-180, there 179; ‘Berichten en mededeelingen – Het Internationaal Verbond voor Vrijzinnig Christendom en Geloofsvrijheid’, *Ibid.* 1931-02 (10 February 1931), 15-16, there 16.

<sup>14</sup> As Dorrien shows in: Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology I*; G.J. Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology II. Idealism, Realism, and Modernity, 1900-1950* (Louisville and London 2003).

<sup>15</sup> This is the reason why Universalists, the distinguishing character of whose theology was the belief that every man will ultimately receive salvation, are not dealt with in this chapter. As their Universalist Church of America merged with the American Unitarian Association into the Unitarian Universalist Association in 1961, they are part of the history of liberal Protestantism in America. Yet, contrary to American Unitarians, Universalists did not have any formal contacts with the NPB. While Unitarianism received much attention, references to Universalism are virtually absent in *De Hervorming*. The first time Universalists were represented at an international conference of religious liberals was in Berlin in 1910. Mentioned in: C.W. Wendte, ‘A Summary of the Berlin Congress of 1910’, in: C.W. Wendte and V.D. Davis (eds.), *Fifth International Congress of Free Christianity and Religious Progress, Berlin, August 5-10, 1910. Proceedings and Papers* (Berlin 1911), 3-27, there 6. With the exception of the Universalists, all groups mentioned in the 1936 *Handbook of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom*, are dealt with in this chapter. Furthermore, three countries that are not mentioned in this handbook, but had liberal Protestant groups with which Dutch modernists were in any way related – namely Austria, Italy and South Africa – are included in this chapter as well.

<sup>16</sup> On the *réunion wallonne*, see: D.F. Poujol, *Histoire et influence des églises wallonnes dans les Pays-Bas* (Paris 1902).

example. As said, Dutch modernists and similar groups abroad kept in touch with each other by sending delegates to the annual assemblies of each other's national associations and to the international conferences held as of the early 1900s (which would later be held under the flag of the IARF), and by writing about each other in the journals of their associations. This chapter ends by reflecting upon these means of contact, because they were the 'channels of communication' through which the Dutch modernist discourse community was connected to the discourse communities of liberal Protestants abroad. As such, they shared with *De Hervorming* three of the latter's roles mentioned in chapter 2: they furthered a sense of urgency to act and a sense of belonging, in this case across national borders, and helped to sustain the IARF(-to-be) as an imagined community. In fact, these channels of communication embedded each liberal Protestant discourse community existing at the national level into a larger international one.

## 2. Germany

In continental Europe, the first organisation intended to defend the interests of liberal Protestants was established in the Palatinate in 1858. An organisation targeting liberal-minded Protestants in all German territories, called '*Deutsche Protestantenverein*' ('German Association of Protestants'), was created in Frankfurt am Main in 1863 and officially constituted in Eisenach in 1865.<sup>17</sup> It was structured as a national organisation with branches at the local and regional level.<sup>18</sup> Alongside defending the ecclesial interests of liberal Protestants, local branches were centres of sociability and organised lectures as well as religious services. Many regional branches issued opinion magazines. At the national level, the *Protestantenverein* held *Protestantentage* (Protestant Days) at different locations each year, during which representatives of local and regional branches assembled in a general meeting, and lectures were held on a broad variety of ecclesial, social and theological topics. These lectures were open to the general public, which accentuated that the *Protestantentage* were meant to be manifestations of liberal Protestant vigour to the outside world: they tried to demonstrate that liberal Protestants were a force in church and social life prefiguring the Christianity of tomorrow.<sup>19</sup> The national *Protestantenverein* also published pamphlets, dispatched propagandists all across the German principalities, and established subcommittees entrusted with specific tasks.<sup>20</sup> Although it did not comprise regional branches, the NPB – being a union of independent local branches, the organising body of *Protestantendagen*, the publisher of a liberal opinion magazine, and an association claiming the title of 'true Protestants' for its membership – was clearly modelled on the *Protestantenverein*.<sup>21</sup> Colenbrander even explicitly

<sup>17</sup> D. Schenkel, *Der deutsche Protestantenverein und seine Bedeutung in der Gegenwart* (Wiesbaden 1868), 22.

<sup>18</sup> H.M. Kirn, 'Protestantenverein', in: G. Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* XXVII (Berlin and New York 1997), 538-542, there 539. The largest regional branch was the one in the Palatinate. See: F. Borggreffe, 'Liberal, sozial, protestantisch. Aus der Geschichte des Pfälzischen Vereins für Protestantische Liebeswerke', *Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde* LXXIII (2006), 75-89, there 76, 78; C. Lepp, 'Der liberale Südwesten. Statuten und Leben der Protestantenvereine in Baden und der Pfalz', *Jahrbuch für badische Kirchen- und Religionsgeschichte* IV (2010), 23-45, there 34-36.

<sup>19</sup> G. Hübing, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik. Zum Verhältnis von Liberalismus und Protestantismus in wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Tübingen 1994), 164-170.

<sup>20</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 112-113.

<sup>21</sup> The NPB was only active at two levels: a local and a national one. Yet, in the mid-1920s, a third, regional level was created within the framework of the NPB. Local branches were united into five regional 'circles' to make sure that branches and the executive board of the NPB would become more closely involved with each other. See: J.W. Beijerman, 'Bonds- en afdeeliningsnieuws', *De Hervorming* 1925-24 (13 June 1925), 190; J.J. Dekker, 'Ingezonden', *Ibid.* 1925-40 (3 October 1925), 316-317, there 316; B.D. Eerdman and J. van Dijk, 'Rapport Commissie Enschede', appendix to

stated that he had the *Protestantenverein* in mind when he argued for the founding of a Dutch association of modernists in the late 1860s.<sup>22</sup> With the exception of those in France, advocates of church reform based on historical-critical modern theological views elsewhere in Europe would found organisations of their own explicitly patterned after the *Protestantenverein* as well.

Aspiring after “a renewal of the Protestant Church in the spirit of evangelical freedom and in harmony with the entire cultural development of our time,” the *Protestantenverein* was an organisational linchpin of what came to be called ‘*Kulturprotestantismus*’ (‘cultural Protestantism’).<sup>23</sup> Analysing the *Begriffsgeschichte* or conceptual history of *Kulturprotestantismus*, German theologian F.W. Graf argues that the term has been used to denote one or all of the following three phenomena. First, it is a general byword for (liberal) Protestant theology in Germany between the early nineteenth century and the 1920s, starting with Schleiermacher’s intuitive theology of experience and ending with Troeltsch’s psychological approach to the history of religion. Second, *Kulturprotestantismus* refers to a particular school within German liberal theology, of which Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1889) was the founder. One of the central arguments in Ritschl’s theology is that the veracity of a religious thought does not depend on its compatibility with scientific knowledge, but on the value it has in a Christian’s life. The life of Jesus as presented in the Gospel, for example, might be non-factual in a scientific sense; it still has value in an ethical sense, as it reflects ultimate humanity.<sup>24</sup> *Die Christliche Welt* (*The Christian World*), issued as an opinion magazine between 1887 and 1941, and the *Vereinigung der Freunde der Christlichen Welt* (*Friends of the Christian World*), established in 1903, provided a platform for those theologians whom Ritschl influenced, such as Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930), Martin Rade (1857-1940) and Troeltsch.<sup>25</sup> Third, *Kulturprotestantismus* designates the

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*Ibid.* 1926-41 (9 October 1926), 1-10, there 4-5; ‘Berichten – Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond afdeeling Groningen’, *Ibid.* 1926-47 (20 November 1926), 374-375, there 374; H.M.J. Sark, ‘Ingezonden – Kringvorming’, *Ibid.* 1926-50 (11 December 1926), 396; C.E. Hooykaas, ‘De voorgestelde kringvorming’, *Ibid.* 1926-51 (18 December 1926), 402; S. Spaans, ‘Bondsnieuws’, *Ibid.* 1927-01 (1 January 1927), 5-6, there 6; S. Spaans, ‘Bondsnieuws’, *Ibid.* 1927-02 (4 February 1927), 14-15, there 14; D. Drijver, ‘De kringvergaderingen’, *Ibid.* 1929-07 (13 July 1929), 53-54. Lindeboom argues that liberal Protestants in Germany, the Netherlands and elsewhere formed ‘associations of Protestants’ instead of ‘associations of liberal Protestants’, because the name ‘Protestant’ had historically been used particularly by champions of a doctrinally tolerant Christianity above denominational differences. Hence, liberal Protestants felt that they were exclusively entitled to call themselves ‘Protestants’ – in fact, they considered ‘liberal Protestant’ to be a pleonasm. See: J. Lindeboom, ‘Oorsprong en geschiedenis van den naam “protestant”’, *Mededeelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen, afdeeling Letterkunde* III.2 (1940), 47-77, there 77. Orthodox Protestants were accordingly hesitant to use the adjective ‘Protestant’ in reference to their organisations. See, e.g.: H.H.J. van As, ‘Waarom noemen wij ons “protestants”?’’, *Protestants Nederland* LXIV.10 (1998), 26-29, there 26-27.

<sup>22</sup> Colenbrander, *Beknopte geschiedenis van het Christendom* I, 279. See also: [Van den Bergh], *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond*, 2-3; Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvbond*, 4; Bank and Van Buuren, *Dutch Culture in a European Perspective* III, 319; Buitenwerf-van der Molen, *God van vooruitgang*, 31; J. van Eijnatten, ‘Contested Unity. Church, Nation and Reform in the Netherlands’, in: J. van Eijnatten and P. Yates (eds.), *The Dynamics of Religious Reform in Northern Europe, 1780-1920* II. *The Churches* (Leuven 2010), 123-152, there 149.

<sup>23</sup> “...eine Erneuerung der protestantischen Kirche im Geiste evangelischer Freiheit und im Einklang mit der gesamten Kulturentwicklung unserer Zeit.” Quoted in: Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 1. Hübinger states that the aim of the *Protestantenverein* quoted here is a concise definition of what *Kulturprotestantismus* is. The English translation is quoted from: K. Fitschen, ‘The Protestant Churches in Germany and Ecclesiastical Reform’, in: Van Eijnatten and Yates (eds.), *The Dynamics of Religious Reform in Northern Europe, 1780-1920* II, 185-214, there 203.

<sup>24</sup> An English-language overview of Ritschl’s views is offered in: D.L. Mueller, *An Introduction to the Theology of Albrecht Ritschl* (Philadelphia 1969). See also: Zachhuber, *Zwischen Idealismus und Historismus*.

<sup>25</sup> R. Schmidt-Rost, ‘Die Christliche Welt. Eine publizistische Gestalt des Kulturprotestantismus’, in: H.M. Müller (ed.), *Kulturprotestantismus. Beiträge zu einer Gestalt des modernen Christentums* (Gütersloh 1992), 245-257; E. Nix, Jr., *Ernst Troeltsch and Comparative Theology* (New York etc. 2010), 38.

particular kind of piety and social ethics of the *Bildungsbürgertum* (the educated bourgeoisie) in Germany between 1890 and 1918. It refers to an attitude to life in which being a Christian is seen as synonymous with being an intellectually, devotionally and ethically developed individual.<sup>26</sup> All in all, the term ‘*Kulturprotestantismus*’, coined in the 1920s to criticise the optimistic expectation in pre-First World War liberal Protestantism that Christianity and culture would one day be brought into perfect harmony, stands for the whole of religious ideas and views on man, the church, the state, society and morality that were characteristic of the liberal Protestant German bourgeoisie in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.<sup>27</sup>

As a world view and outlook on life, *Kulturprotestantismus* contained the following constitutive elements. First, *Kulturprotestantismus* was, theologically speaking, based on historical-critical methodology. Its adherents rejected supernatural interpretations of biblical texts and focused on the ethical implications expressed in Jesus’s life and teachings.

Second, the notion of ‘*Bildung*’ was central to *Kulturprotestantismus*. The German word ‘*Bildung*’ is one of those terms that loses some of its meaning when it is translated into a different language. Yet, describing it as ‘spiritual development’ is, at least in the context of *Kulturprotestantismus*, probably adequate. Being ‘*gebildet*’ in a ‘*kulturprotestantische*’ sense meant being acquainted with the cultural foundations of Christian civilisation, having a concept of God that does not conflict with reason and stems from one’s own inner life, and being able to act in accordance with the inner voice of conscience that tells what is good and what is not – in sum, it meant having a clear mind, a pious heart and a strongly developed moral sense, and as such being a true autonomous *individual*. Those who were most *gebildet* had a social duty to guide others in their spiritual development.<sup>28</sup> As theologian F. Borggreffe shows in relation to Rhineland-Palatinate, *Kulturprotestanten* united in the regional *Protestantenverein* considered *Bildung* to be the key to solving social misery. Contrasting diaconal relief and charity, which provided the underprivileged with basic material needs, with what has been called ‘healthful humanitarianism’ in chapter 6, these liberal Protestants set up social initiatives such as community homes and district nursing to help the poor and needy to become self-supporting individuals.<sup>29</sup> In her study on the national *Protestantenverein*, historian C. Lepp also demonstrates that liberal Protestants firmly believed in social reform through *Bildung*.<sup>30</sup>

Third, *Kulturprotestantismus* was essentially *bürgerlich* or bourgeois – with regard not only to the class background of its adherents, but also to the values it cultivated.<sup>31</sup> Frugality,

<sup>26</sup> F.W. Graf, ‘Kulturprotestantismus. Zur Begriffsgeschichte einer theologiepolitischen Chiffre’, in: Müller (ed.), *Kulturprotestantismus*, 21-77, there 22-23.

<sup>27</sup> G. Hübinger, ‘Kulturprotestantismus, Bürgerkirche und liberaler Revisionismus im wilhelminischen Deutschland’, in: W. Schieder (ed.), *Religion und Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart 1993), 272-299, there 281. The dialectical theology that rose to prominence in the 1920s and in the circle of which the term ‘*Kulturprotestantismus*’ was first used, was characterised by cultural criticism. Its representatives, first and foremost K. Barth, rejected a synthesis of Christianity and modern culture in which the former had to adapt to the latter. See: Graf, ‘Kulturprotestantismus’, 21, note 2.

<sup>28</sup> G. Hübinger, ‘Drei Generationen deutscher Kulturprotestanten 1860-1918’, in: J. Dantine, K. Thien and M. Weinzierl (eds.), *Protestantische Mentalitäten* (Wien 1999), 181-193, there 181-182; D. Pichler, *Bürgertum und Protestantismus. Die Geschichte der Familie Ludwig in Wien und Oberösterreich (1860-1900)* (Wien etc. 2003), 19. See also: R. Preul, ‘Aspekte eines kulturprotestantischen Bildungsbegriffs’, in: Müller (ed.), *Kulturprotestantismus*, 165-182.

<sup>29</sup> F. Borggreffe, ‘Liberalismus und soziale Herausforderungen’, *Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde* LXXVI (2009), 173-185.

<sup>30</sup> C. Lepp, *Protestantisch-liberaler Aufbruch in die Moderne. Der deutsche Protestantenverein in der Zeit der Reichsgründung und des Kulturkampfes* (Gütersloh 1996), esp. 387.

<sup>31</sup> E.g.: Lepp, ‘Der liberale Südwesten’, 28-29.



decency, modest piety, respectability, the ability to support oneself, individuality and cultural refinement, promoted in *Kulturprotestantismus* through *Bildung*, were all bourgeois values – in fact, the whole idea of *Bildung* came down to the inculcation of what the bourgeoisie regarded as valuable in life.<sup>32</sup> For *Kulturprotestanten*, one's social status accordingly depended on one's level of spiritual development – and, by necessity, on one's financial independence or *Besitz*.<sup>33</sup> After all, as already explained in chapter 6, one needed the means and time to be able to develop oneself spiritually. As in the late nineteenth century the bourgeois values it fostered came under attack from both a new, anti-bourgeois generation of philosophers, artists and belletrists and the emerging labour movement, *Kulturprotestantismus* failed to exert a lasting influence on the intellectual vanguard and the lower classes.<sup>34</sup>

Fourth, *Kulturprotestantismus* usually went hand in hand with political liberalism – unsurprisingly, as the latter was just as infused with bourgeois ideals and ideas as the former. Leading men of the *Protestantenverein* openly supported liberal politics and some of them were even actively engaged in liberal political parties.<sup>35</sup>

Fifth, *Kulturprotestantismus* was anti-confessionalist. The *Protestantenverein* was therefore first and foremost intended to be an association through which confessionalism could be counterattacked.<sup>36</sup> Since the German state authorities, which heavily interfered in church life, favoured Protestant orthodoxy, the founders of the association urged all liberal-minded Protestants to join forces in order to be strong enough to demand necessary liturgical and organisational reforms. They feared that if endorsement of traditional doctrines continued to be a precondition for obtaining church membership or access to the pulpit, more and more people would eventually leave the churches and fall prey to a materialist outlook on life.<sup>37</sup>

Sixth, *Kulturprotestantismus* was nationalist.<sup>38</sup> The *Protestantenverein* hence opposed confessionalism not only as it manifested itself within Protestantism, but also in its Roman Catholic, ultramontanist form. It did so not only because these movements conflicted with liberal Protestants' own interests, but also because liberal Protestants considered both of them to be onslaughts on the German national identity and threats to the welfare of the German nation. Seeing Martin Luther as the one who had laid the foundations of the German national identity, liberal Protestants blamed their orthodox antagonists for failing to discern between Luther's conceptual universe and Luther's spirit. Orthodoxy, clinging to the tenets of sixteenth-century Lutheranism, did not take into account that Luther had developed his conception of God and religious imagery in accordance with the scientific and scholarly knowledge of his age, which was primitive compared to nineteenth-century knowledge. Daniel Schenkel (1813-1885), one of the founding fathers of the *Protestantenverein*, accordingly stated in 1868 to have no doubt

<sup>32</sup> A. Schulz, *Lebenswelt und Kultur des Bürgertums im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (München 2005), 19-20.

<sup>33</sup> On '*Bildung und Besitz*' as the pillars of nineteenth-century bourgeois Germany, see: J. Kocka, 'Das europäische Muster und der deutsche Fall', in: J. Kocka (ed.), *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert I. Einheit und Vielfalt Europas* (Göttingen 1995), 9-75.

<sup>34</sup> Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 75; Hübinger, 'Drei Generationen deutscher Kulturprotestanten', 186-188.

<sup>35</sup> Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 75-160; Lepp, *Protestantisch-liberaler Aufbruch in die Moderne*, 360-381; Kirm, 'Protestantenverein', 538.

<sup>36</sup> Lepp, *Protestantisch-liberaler Aufbruch in die Moderne*, 40-41.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 189-193.

<sup>38</sup> See in particular: *Ibid.*, 294-319; C. Lepp, 'Protestanten feiern ihre Nation. Die kulturprotestantischen Ursprünge des Sedantages', *Historisches Jahrbuch CXVIII* (1998), 201-222.

whatsoever that Luther, ‘transplanted’ directly from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, would revise his religious views: “Luther would say: in many aspects, I was still a child three centuries ago; meanwhile, time has progressed on the waves of development and civilisation.” Therefore, liberal Protestants maintained that what really mattered was Luther’s attitude of mind rather than his doctrinal persuasion. They believed that Luther had lived his life in a spirit of tolerance, free piety, and reform- and progress-mindedness. Schenkel was convinced that Luther would have assumed the leadership of the *Protestantenverein*, as it acted in ‘his’ spirit.<sup>39</sup> By thus turning Luther, the father of the German language and culture, into the spiritual father of *Kulturprotestantismus*, liberal Protestants turned *Kulturprotestantismus* into an essential element of the German national identity. Consequently, they regarded Catholicism to be non- and even anti-German. Ultramontanism, which accentuated absolute obedience to the pope and the clergy in all spheres of life and stimulated the institutionalisation of a Roman Catholic subculture in society at large, had become the dominant current within Catholicism in the second half of the nineteenth century, in Germany and elsewhere. Both orthodox and liberal Protestants felt that loyalty to the pope and loyalty to the German nation were incompatible, as the papacy was, to quote prominent member of the *Protestantenverein* J.C. Bluntschli (1808-1881), “the barrier to all civilisation and the true cause of all civil upheavals in the current age.”<sup>40</sup> *Kulturprotestanten* therefore supported the German government in its endeavour to counteract a growing Catholic visibility, in and influence on, German social, cultural and political life during the so-called ‘*Kulturkampf*’ of the 1870s.<sup>41</sup>

Seventh and last, the ideal of a *Volkskirche*, which was similar to the ideal of the *volkskerk* explained in chapter 4, was a constitutive element of *Kulturprotestantismus*. The pursuit of this ideal was directly related to the latter’s nationalist character, in that the unification of the German principalities into the German Empire should find expression in church life. A national *Volkskirche* should replace the existing *Landeskirchen*, each of which had jurisdiction only within the boundaries of one of the old principalities. It had to be based on the principle of doctrinal freedom if it was to include as many citizens as possible, and ought to be the embodiment and guardian of the German nationality. As the bourgeois *Kulturprotestanten* believed themselves to be the backbone of the German nation, they envisioned this *Volkskirche* to be a disseminator of their ideas and values. In order for the *Volkskirche* to be thoroughly embedded in cultural and social life, the *Protestantenverein* wanted to increase lay involvement with ecclesial affairs by striving for the realisation of what its leaders called the ‘*Gemeindeprinzip*’: the focus in church life should be on the self-governing local congregation.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> “Hij [Luther, TK] zou zeggen: voor drie eeuwen was ik nog in menig opzigt een kind; intusschen is de tijd magtig vooruitgegaan op den stroom der ontwikkeling en beschaving.” Quoted in: P. Hofstede de Groot, ‘Het gedenkteeken te Worms’, *Waarheid in Liefde* XXXII.4 (1868), 738-774, there 743. See also: H. Fenske, ‘Das Lutherbild des Protestantenvereins im 19. Jahrhundert’, *Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde* L (1983), 63-76.

<sup>40</sup> “...das Hindernis aller Zivilisation und die wahre Quelle aller Revolution in der Gegenwart.” Quoted in: J. Becker, *Liberaler Staat und Kirche in der Ära von Reichsgründung und Kulturkampf. Geschichte und Strukturen ihres Verhältnisses in Baden, 1860-1876* (Mainz 1973), 181.

<sup>41</sup> Lepp, *Protestantisch-liberaler Aufbruch in die Moderne*, 319-360; C. Metzner, *Johann Caspar Bluntschli. Leben, Zeitgeschehen und Kirchenpolitik 1808-1881* (Frankfurt am Main 2009), 111-154.

<sup>42</sup> On the issue of church reform in *Kulturprotestantismus*, see: Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 159-165, 230, 263, 307; Lepp, *Protestantisch-liberaler Aufbruch in die Moderne*, 133-282; Kirn, ‘Protestantenverein’, 539; Fitschen, ‘The Protestant Churches in Germany and Ecclesiastical Reform’, 203-204.

Without substantiating his claim, historian H. Paul states in a 2010 article, in which he refers to theology at Leiden University in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, that “allowing for some differences, this liberal theology is best seen as a Dutch version of German *Kulturprotestantismus*.”<sup>43</sup> Although it would be more precise to equate *Kulturprotestantismus* with Dutch modernism instead of with Dutch liberal theology – after all, *Kulturprotestantismus* and Dutch modernism included liberal theological views, but were not merely currents in theology, as they also included a particular outlook on church, state and society –, a comparison between the seven constitutive elements of *Kulturprotestantismus* and the characteristics of Dutch modernism analysed in the previous chapters shows that Paul’s claim is indeed legitimate. *Kulturprotestanten* and Dutch modernists fully accepted historical-critical methodology as the basis for theological reflection. The discourse of *Bildung* resembles the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors. Dutch modernism was just as bourgeois, just as often accompanied by a politically liberal persuasion and just as anti-confessionalist as *Kulturprotestantismus*. Dutch modernists and German *Kulturprotestanten* were both nationalist in the sense that they propagated national unity, opposing segregation along religious lines (though one has to take into account that in the Netherlands, nationalism lacked the strong political connotations that it had in Germany). Finally, the ideal of the *Volkskirche* that was cherished in the bosom of the *Protestantenverein* found a counterpart in the ideal of the *volkskerk* in Dutch liberal Reformed circles.

The seven elements spelled out above characterise *Kulturprotestantismus* as it was given shape to by the *Protestantenverein* in the second half of the nineteenth century. However, just as discontent with modernism in its original form – ‘old-school modernism’ – began to manifest itself within the Dutch modernist movement towards the end of the nineteenth century, at the same time objections were raised against this archetypal form of *Kulturprotestantismus* within the German liberal Protestant community. In fact, those involved with the already-mentioned magazine *Die Christliche Welt* and the *Vereinigung der Freunde der Christlichen Welt* blamed the *Protestantenverein* for allying itself to a political liberalism that was unable to satisfactorily solve the social question, and hence for making it seem as if *Kulturprotestantismus* had more to do with ecclesial than with social reform.<sup>44</sup> Feeling that the *Protestantenverein* took the existing social order too much for granted in its endeavour to harmonise Christianity and culture, and stressing that every individual had to internalise the laws of the Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus, contributors to *Die Christliche Welt* as Harnack and Rade actively participated in the so-called ‘*Evangelisch-soziale Kongress*’ (‘Protestant Social Congress’). This platform was created in 1890 to enable theologians with diverse conceptions of God to discuss with each other questions of social reform, particularly the question of how a ‘social Christianity’ could and should be shaped.<sup>45</sup> Notwithstanding its initial theologically mixed character, it soon developed

<sup>43</sup> H.J. Paul, ‘Religion and the Crisis of Historicism. Protestant and Catholic Perspectives’, *Journal of the Philosophy of History* IV (2010), 172-194, there 177.

<sup>44</sup> F.W. Graf, ‘Kulturprotestantismus’, in: G. Müller (ed.), *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* XX (Berlin and New York 1990), 230-243, there 234; Graf, ‘Kulturprotestantismus’, 36-43. In a 1905 article in *De Hervorming*, I. van den Bergh also perceived a lack of interest in social issues in the *Protestantenverein*, arguing that the association therefore failed to attract more support. See: I. van den Bergh, ‘De inrichting van den Protestantenvond’, *De Hervorming* 1905-04 (28 January 1905), 26-27, there 26.

<sup>45</sup> G. Kretschmar, *Der Evangelisch-soziale Kongress. Der deutsche Protestantismus und die soziale Frage* (Stuttgart 1972), 9, 42-43; V. Drehsen, “‘Evangelischer Glaube, brüderliche Wohlfahrt und wahre Bildung.’” *Der Evangelisch-*

into an assembly in which liberal Protestant theologians took the lead – Hübinger accordingly calls the *Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß* one of the three “*Vereinstypen*” of *Kulturprotestantismus*, next to the *Protestantenverein* and the *Freunde der Christlichen Welt*.<sup>46</sup> While the identification of *Kulturprotestantismus* with a *laissez-faire* liberalism was criticised in the circles of the *Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß* and the *Christliche Welt*, those moving in these circles did not automatically turn towards social democracy. The *Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß* was even explicitly established in opposition to social democracy, which the founders of the *Kongreß* denounced due to the materialistic outlook on life on which it was based.<sup>47</sup> Most of the individuals involved with the *Kongreß* took up a political position somewhere between social democracy and classical liberalism, which could perhaps best be characterised as ‘progressive liberal’ and which was comparable to the position of the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* in Dutch politics. Just as in the Netherlands, liberal Protestant ministers who identified with some form of political socialism, either within social democratic or Christian socialist parties, remained a minority in Germany.<sup>48</sup>

*Kulturprotestanten* were not only engaged in initiatives to improve the lives of those on the lowest rungs of the social ladder in Germany, but also in initiatives to help whole peoples on a lower rung of the ladder of civilisation than Christian Europeans to become spiritually more developed. While in the Dutch modernist community only a minority eagerly applied the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors to the field of foreign mission, enthusiasm for missionary activities seems to have been bigger among German *Kulturprotestanten*. The *Allgemeine evangelisch-protestantische Missionsverein*, referred to in chapter 10, was established in 1884 without being formally affiliated to any particular theological or ecclesial current, but in practice heavily relied on liberal Protestant support. Regional branches of the *Protestantenverein* as those in Baden and the Palatinate were closely involved with the AEPMV, and so were theologians associated with *Die Christliche Welt* as Harnack, Troeltsch and Rade.<sup>49</sup> In the vision of foreign mission of the AEPMV, clear echoes of liberal Protestant discourse could accordingly be heard. The AEPMV did not focus on animists and worshippers of nature in inner Africa, the inlands of South America or remote islands in South Asia, but on those Asian peoples who had already reached a certain level of civilisation and spiritual development: the Chinese and the Japanese. It did so based on the conviction that if the more civilised non-Christian peoples entered into the spiritual sphere of influence of Christianity, less civilised non-Christian peoples would in due course follow their example. Missionaries of the AEPMV did not want to push the Chinese and Japanese into accepting particular doctrines, but they rather wanted to help East Asians in acquiring a Christian spirit by internalising the principles of life reflected in (the liberal

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soziale Kongreß als sozialetisches und praktisch-theologisches Forum des Kulturprotestantismus im wilhelminischen Kaiserreich (1890-1914)’, in: Müller (ed.), *Kulturprotestantismus*, 190-229.

<sup>46</sup> “...organisational embodiments...” Quoted from: Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 52.

<sup>47</sup> W. Pentz, *Sozialprotestantismus in den USA und Deutschland. Social Gospel und christlich soziale Bewegung bis 1914* (Munich 2005), 126.

<sup>48</sup> Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 63-74.

<sup>49</sup> J. Jantsch, ‘Einleitung’, in: A. von Harnack and M. Rade (J. Jantsch ed.), *Der Briefwechsel zwischen Adolf von Harnack und Martin Rade. Theologie auf dem öffentlichen Markt* (Berlin and New York 1996), 5-130, there 89; G. Stüber, ‘Liberalismus und Mission am Beispiel der Ostasienmission, 1884-1900’, *Blätter für pfälzische Kirchengeschichte und religiöse Volkskunde* LXXVI (2009), 151-171, there 163, 167; J.U. Mack, *Menschenbilder. Anthropologische Konzepte und stereotype Vorstellungen vom Menschen in der Publizistik der Basler Mission 1816-1914* (Zürich 2013), 63.

Protestant image of) Jesus. They tried to do so by looking for ‘elements of truth’ in Chinese and Japanese religion and culture with which they could link up their own liberal Protestant outlook on and attitude to life. Comparative study of religion was therefore regarded as a crucial element in the training of a missionary.<sup>50</sup> As said in chapter 10, some Dutch modernists considered the AEPMV to be an example, but their numbers, as well as those of modernist champions of foreign mission in general, remained small. That German liberal Protestants were more involved with foreign mission than Dutch modernists had most likely to do with the former’s more politically charged nationalist views and related sympathy for the imperialist politics of the German government: conducting mission was not only a means to spread liberal Christian civilisation, but also a means to expand the *German* sphere of influence in the world.<sup>51</sup>

Reviewing the way in which the organised liberal Protestant movement in Germany developed from its emergence in the third quarter of the nineteenth century until the outbreak of the Second World War as a whole, strong parallels become visible with the history of the modernist movement during the Netherlands in the same period. The zeal and self-confidence with which the organised liberal Protestant movement was permeated during its formative phase evolved into a feeling of disappointment towards the end of the nineteenth century. Just as the NPB, the *Protestantenverein* fell short of its founders’ expectations: it only managed to frustrate orthodox attempts to purge the *Landeskirchen* of liberal elements without realising thorough ecclesial reforms, while its numerical growth remained rather modest. The number of local and regional branches affiliated to the *Protestantenverein* was 125 in 1875, went down to 25 in 1890 and further diminished to merely 15 in 1908.<sup>52</sup> The membership of the *Protestantenverein*, numbering 7,500 in 1878, contrariwise continued to grow until approximately 1910, when it reached a peak number of 20,000 or 50,000.<sup>53</sup> This increase, which should be attributed to the circumstance that the *Protestantenverein* was the most ardent champion of doctrinal freedom in church life and called attention to itself by siding with liberal ministers in highly-publicised disciplinary cases – such as those of C.W. Jatho (1851-1913) and Gottfried Traub (1869-1956) –, ought not to obscure that the association failed to reinvigorate the organised liberal Protestant movement in Germany. It had to hand over its role as the flagship of *Kulturprotestantismus* to the group around *Die Christliche Welt* – qualitatively more so than quantitatively. Whereas almost 5,000 individuals had a subscription to this magazine in 1910, the membership of the association founded around it was as low as 860 in 1904 and 1,415 nine years later.<sup>54</sup> Due to a

<sup>50</sup> R.H. Wippich, ‘Christliche Mission und Kulturimperialismus. Aufbau und Entwicklung der deutschen protestantischen Missionstätigkeit in der Meiji-Zeit’, in: H. Gössmann and A. Mrugalla (eds.), *11. Deutschsprachiger Japanologentag in Trier 1999 I. Geschichte, Politik, Recht, Wirtschaft* (Münster etc. 1999), 51-61, there 51-52; Stüber, ‘Liberalismus und Mission am Beispiel der Ostasienmission’, 153-154; Mack, *Menschenbilder*, 63-66.

<sup>51</sup> Th. Nipperdey, *Deutsche Geschichte, 1866-1918 I. Arbeitswelt und Bürgergeist* (München 1994), 489-490; Th. Heese, ‘Das koloniale Osnabrück’, in: U. van der Heyden and J. Zeller (eds.), *Kolonialismus hierzulande. Eine Spurensuche in Deutschland* (Erfurt 2008), 40-47, there 44; Wippich, ‘Christliche Mission’, 52.

<sup>52</sup> Kirn, ‘Protestantenverein’, 539.

<sup>53</sup> D. Menzel, *Libérale Religionspädagogik und freier Protestantismus. Das Beispiel Hans Schlemmer (1885-1958)* (München 2001), 48. Hübinger says that the *Protestantenverein* had 50,000 members in 1908, while Petersen states that it only had 20,000 to 30,000 members in 1913. See: Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 54; E. Petersen, ‘Protestantenverein’, in: F.M. Schiele and L. Zscharnack (eds.), *Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart IV* (Tübingen 1913), 1894-1899, there 1898.

<sup>54</sup> Hübinger, ‘Kulturprotestantismus, Bürgerkirche und liberaler Revisionismus’, 293; Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 53.

system of co-optation, the *Freunde der Christlichen Welt* remained a platform of theologians and ministers, as did the *Evangelisch-soziale Kongreß*, which had 1,950 supporters in 1913.<sup>55</sup>

Disappointment with the failure of *Kulturprotestantismus* to satisfactorily harmonise Christianity and culture led some to develop occultist outlooks on life and alternative lifestyles, such as those dealt with in chapter 5. Hübinger even sees Anthroposophy and the *Lebensreformbewegung* as offshoots of *Kulturprotestantismus*: they were rooted in the latter's individual-centred spirituality while criticising its bourgeois values.<sup>56</sup> An even bigger problem for the organisations giving shape to *Kulturprotestantismus* than the attraction that the little religions exerted on a tiny minority of liberal Protestants was their inability to 'reinvent' themselves after the First World War, which gave a deathblow to the cultural optimism and values of the *Bildungsbürgertum* that were so characteristic of *Kulturprotestantismus*. They therefore quickly lost significance in the interwar period.<sup>57</sup> The remnants of the *Protestantenverein* and the *Freunde der Christlichen Welt* that survived the Second World War merged together with several smaller associations that had emerged in the 1910s and 1920s either as less church-oriented alternatives to the *Protestantenverein* or due to discontent with the progressive liberal orientation of *Die Christliche Welt*, into the *Deutsche Bund für freies Christentum* (German League for Free Christianity) in 1948.<sup>58</sup>

### 3. France

In France, an organised liberal Protestant movement came into being in 1861. That year, eighteen members of the Reformed congregation in Paris founded the *Union protestante libérale* (Liberal Protestant Union) in response to the unwillingness of the orthodox majority in their congregation to appoint ministers with a theologically liberal orientation.<sup>59</sup> Just as many NPB branches would do, the *Union* put forward liberal-minded candidates during the elections of elders, and organised religious services as an alternative to church services. It continued to exist until May 1874, when a new, more tightly organised body, the *Comité libéral de l'église réformée de Paris* (Liberal Committee of the Reformed Church in Paris), took over its role as assembly point of Reformed liberals in Paris.<sup>60</sup> In 1872, liberal-oriented congregations all over France installed the *Délégation libérale des églises réformées de France* (Liberal Delegation of the Reformed Churches in France), which basically functioned as the unofficial synod of these congregations.<sup>61</sup> Due to its efforts, the Reformed congregation in Paris became subdivided into 'neighbourhood parishes' – a measure implemented in order to end quarrels between the orthodox and liberals, and, as shown in chapter 4, also put forward by some modernists in the Dutch Reformed Church – and several liberal-

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<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> Hübinger, 'Drei Generationen deutscher Kulturprotestanten', 190.

<sup>57</sup> *Die Christliche Welt* only had 3,000 subscribers left in the interwar period. See: S. Knappenberger-Jans, *Verlagspolitik und Wissenschaft. Der Verlag J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck) im frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden 2001), 545.

<sup>58</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 128; Kirn, 'Protestantenverein', 541; A. Knuth, *Der Protestantismus als moderne Religion. Historisch-systematische Rekonstruktion der religionsphilosophischen Theologie Kurt Leesers (1887-1965)* (Frankfurt am Main 2005), 105; R. Bultmann, *Rudolf Bultmann. Eine Biographie* (Tübingen 2012), 148-149.

<sup>59</sup> F. De Coninck, *L'Union protestante libérale* (Le Havre 1861). Lindeboom erroneously indicates 1864 as the year of its founding. See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 121.

<sup>60</sup> A. Encrevé, 'Les protestants à Paris à la fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle', *Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire du Protestantisme Français* CLIV (2008), 351-382, there 364-366.

<sup>61</sup> According to Harismendy, the *Délégation libérale* was the successor to the *Union protestante libérale*. See: P. Harismendy, 'Séparation et désétablissement. Les concours d'un objet historique', *Ibid.* CLI (2005), 549-564, there 551.

oriented professors were appointed to the theological faculties in Montauban and Paris.<sup>62</sup> According to Lindeboom, some French Calvinists who identified as ‘liberals’ had theological views closely resembling those of Dutch *evangelischen*, while others were of the same mind as Dutch modernists.<sup>63</sup>

Among the latter, several had a connection to the Netherlands. A.J. Coquerel, Jr., for example, was born in Amsterdam, where his father was the minister of the Walloon Reformed congregation at the time. After studying theology in Geneva and Strasbourg, he became an assistant minister in the French town of Nîmes and subsequently Paris. In 1864, the orthodox majority in the Reformed church council of Paris decided to deny him access to the pulpit: Coquerel was involved with the *Union protestante libérale* and had written a favourable review of *La vie de Jésus* (*The Life of Jesus*), in which author Ernest Renan (1823-1892), following D.F. Strauss, attempted to reconstruct the life of Jesus ‘as it had truly been’. Just as Dutch Reformed liberals would do by founding VVH branches in the early twentieth century, Coquerel and the liberal-minded Reformed Parisians who supported him organised religious services of their own without resigning their membership of the local Reformed congregation. Moreover, just as his fellow modernists from the Netherlands, he demonstrated that liberal Protestantism wanted to be both an ecclesial and a social reform movement by engaging in activities contributing to the spiritual development of low-class individuals.<sup>64</sup> Other leading French modern theologians with a Dutch link were Albert Réville and his son Jean (1854-1908). Albert was the minister of the Walloon Reformed congregation in Rotterdam from 1851 to 1872. He may have gone to the Netherlands out of interest in the modern theological school that was emerging there.<sup>65</sup> Writing about Dutch modern theology in French, even translating some of J.H. Scholten’s and C.P. Tiele’s publications into his native language during his time in Rotterdam, Albert Réville played a vital role in connecting French *protestantisme libéral* and Dutch modernism.<sup>66</sup> Jean Réville, a son-in-law of Coquerel, kept in touch with Dutch modern theologians as well; he corresponded with Tiele and Kuenen.<sup>67</sup>

In 1872, the first year since 1659 in which the Reformed churches in France were allowed to convene a national synod, the paths of the orthodox and liberals parted. Afterwards, both groups organised, without government recognition, synods of their own. Consequently, decades of rivalry within the French Reformed community followed, with both groups trying to strengthen their own position in church life and with the government taking measures that alternately, depending on the political situation of the moment, affected the liberals, the orthodox, or both. It was a government measure that ultimately led to the permanent institutionalisation

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<sup>62</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 142. The theological faculty in Paris was founded in 1877 as a replacement for the ancient theological faculty in Strasbourg, a town occupied by Germany in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871. Just as the faculty in Strasbourg, the faculty in Paris had a mixed Calvinist-Lutheran character. See: M. Scheidhauer, ‘La création de la Faculté de Théologie Protestante de Paris (1877)’, *Revue d’Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* LVII.3 (1977), 291-325, there 319-320.

<sup>63</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 143.

<sup>64</sup> E. Stroehlin, *Athanase Coquerel fils. Étude biographique* (Paris 1886), 287-311, 329, 334-335; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 127-128.

<sup>65</sup> I. Strenski, *Theology and the First Theory of Sacrifice* (Leiden and Boston 2003), 128-131.

<sup>66</sup> As Vanderlaan states, Réville was “for long an actual part of the Dutch [modernist] movement.” Quoted from: E.C. Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland* (London etc. 1924), 119.

<sup>67</sup> A.L. Molendijk, ‘At the Cross-Roads. Early Dutch Science of Religion in International Perspective’, in: S. Hjelde (ed.), *Man, Meaning, and Mystery. Hundred Years of History of Religions in Norway: The Heritage of W. Brede Kristensen* (Leiden, Boston and Cologne 2000), 19-56, there 46; UBL BPL 3028.

of the split in French Reformed Protestantism. Before 1905, Roman Catholicism, Lutheranism, Calvinism and Judaism had been the only religions with government recognition, due to which the communities adhering to one of these religions had received state support for the maintenance of their church buildings and for the training of their clergy. The Protestant theological faculty in Paris, for example, had been paid for by the government. In 1905, however, with the promulgation of the law separating church and state, this state support came to an end. Now, every congregation in France had to apply for the status of an *association cultuelle* (religious association) to keep possession of its church building. Orthodox Reformed congregations applying for this status joined forces in the *Union nationale des Églises réformées évangéliques* (National Union of Evangelical Reformed Churches) in 1906. That same year, in Jarnac, a small town in the department of Charente, a group assembled that tried to restore the unity of the French Reformed community. However, the orthodox *évangéliques* congregations rejected the Jarnac initiative, while the most radical liberals, among them Jean Réville, decided to stand aloof as well and established the *Union nationale des Églises réformées unies* (National Union of United Reformed Churches) in April 1907. The latter were not willing to give up their right to preach as they wanted to for the sake of ecclesial unity. The congregations supporting the Jarnac initiative had no other choice than to form yet a third Reformed ecclesial body, the *Union nationale des Églises réformées* (National Union of Reformed Churches), in June 1907. When this body made clear that it would not impose restrictions on liberal ministers in any way, the liberal *églises réformées unies* merged with it in 1912. From then on, a separately organised liberal Protestant movement, striving for doctrinal freedom, was no longer needed in French church life.<sup>68</sup> The theologically most radical liberal Reformed ministers continued to occasionally meet within the framework of the *association fraternelle des pasteurs libéraux de France* (French Fellowship of Liberal Ministers), more or less resembling the Dutch meetings of modern theologians, until 1938. They had done so since 1885.<sup>69</sup>

Ever since its emergence in the 1850s, the liberal current remained rather small within French Protestantism, itself already a tiny minority.<sup>70</sup> If the numbers of congregations affiliated to one of the three *unions nationales* constituted in 1906 and 1907 are taken as an indication of the balance of power within French Protestantism around 1900, then orthodoxy clearly had the upper hand: the orthodox union consisted of 440 congregations, while the liberal union only comprised 100 congregations, and the number of congregations belonging to the ‘Jarnac’ union, the union of those who felt that the theological differences between the orthodox and the liberals should not tear the French Reformed community apart, was as low as 80.<sup>71</sup> However, in the late nineteenth century, the influence liberal Protestantism exerted outside of church life was bigger than its numerical weakness might suggest. It did certainly not attract ‘intellectuals’,

<sup>68</sup> This paragraph is based on: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 137-152; A. Encrevé, ‘Le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle’, in: H. Dubief and J. Poujol (eds.), *La France protestante. Histoire et lieux de mémoire* (Paris 1996), 115-144, there 131-140; J. Baubérot, ‘Le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle’, in: Dubief and Poujol (eds.), *La France protestante*, 145-165, there 148-149; P. Cabanel, *Histoire des protestants en France (XVI<sup>e</sup>-XXI<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris 2012), 961-966.

<sup>69</sup> P.Y. Kirschleger, ‘L’Association fraternelle des pasteurs libéraux de France’, *Bulletin de la Société de l’Histoire du Protestantisme Français* CLIV (2008), 383-396.

<sup>70</sup> Since the eighteenth century, Protestants have only constituted two to three percent of the French population. See: Cabanel, *Histoire des protestants en France*, 9.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 964. Though “*plusieurs*” (“many”) Reformed congregations did not, or at least not immediately, join any of these three groups. See: Baubérot, ‘Le XX<sup>e</sup> siècle’, 148. Moreover, some congregations were simultaneously affiliated to the liberal and ‘Jarnac’ unions. See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 150, note 4.



as defined in chapter 8, in large numbers, and it seems to have become a less important force in intellectual and political life in due course. But liberal Protestantism did help to shape the intellectual and political climate during the first three decades of the French Third Republic.<sup>72</sup> After 1870, the year in which Emperor Napoleon III (1808-1873) was dethroned, some leading republican politicians, most notably Jules Favre (1809-1880), Jules Simon (1814-1896) and Jules Ferry (1832-1893), showed liberal Protestant sympathies. Several liberal Protestants were in their circle of acquaintances and advisors.<sup>73</sup> Later Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ferdinand Buisson (1841-1932), to name only the most well-known liberal Protestant active in French politics, contributed to the realisation of the republican ideal of *laïcité*: he championed and was involved with the construction of a public educational system in which religious instruction was forbidden – a system intended to attack the social power of the Roman Catholic Church – and the separation of church and state. In public opinion at large, liberal Protestant voices were sometimes among the most prominent ones: Albert Réville, for example, got involved in the famous controversy surrounding the conviction of Alfred Dreyfus (1859-1935), a Jewish soldier who was unjustly accused of spying for Germany.<sup>74</sup>

Just as in the Netherlands, the grand majority of liberal Protestants in France belonged to the bourgeois or cultured class.<sup>75</sup> Liberal Protestantism did not reach the masses and failed to become a grand source of influence in the labour movement. Some have nonetheless regarded the cause of liberal Protestantism – furthering the free spiritual development of every individual – and the cause of socialism – granting every individual a humane existence – to be two sides of the same coin. Buisson, for instance, developed in a politically socialist direction, even representing a radical-socialist party in parliament in the early twentieth century.<sup>76</sup> French Reformed theologians Charles Wagner (1852-1918), Élie Gounelle (1865-1950) and Wilfred Monod (1867-1943), who were counted among liberals yet were theologically more moderate than modernists in the proper sense such as Albert and Jean Réville – the fact that the three of them were the driving forces behind the Jarnac initiative accentuates this<sup>77</sup> –, were ardent advocates of Christian socialism in France.<sup>78</sup> Instead of actually connecting the liberal Protestant and labour movements, however, French liberal Protestant socialist ministers merely became a faction among both liberal Protestants and among socialists – a fate they shared with the *Blijde Wereld*

<sup>72</sup> D. Robert, 'Les intellectuels d'origine non-protestante dans le protestantisme des débuts de la Troisième République', in: A. Encrevé and M. Richard (eds.), *Actes du colloque 'Les protestants dans les débuts de la Troisième République (1871-1885)'* (Paris, 3-6 octobre 1978) (Paris 1979), 91-98, there 93-94, 98; P. Nord, *The Republican Moment. Struggles for Democracy in Nineteenth-Century France* (London 1995), 90-114.

<sup>73</sup> J.M. Gaillard, *Jules Ferry* (Paris 1989), 148-150; P. Pierrard, *Les Chrétiens et l'affaire Dreyfus* (Paris 1998), 11; P. Cabanel, *Le Dieu de la République. Aux sources protestantes de la laïcité (1860-1900)* (Rennes 2003).

<sup>74</sup> A. Encrevé, 'Les protestants républicains peuvent-ils être des modérés entre 1870 et 1905?', in: J. Prévotat et J. Vavasseur-Despierre (eds.), *Les "chrétiens modérés" en France et en Europe, 1870-1960* (Villeneuve d'Ascq 2013), 63-78, there 75-78.

<sup>75</sup> Gaillard, *Jules Ferry*, 149.

<sup>76</sup> S. Tomei, 'Ferdinand Buisson, protestantisme libéral et radical-socialisme', in: S. Baumont and A. Dorna (eds.), *Les grands figures du radicalisme. Les radicaux dans le siècle 1901-2001* (Toulouse 2001), 117-122, there 120. The word 'radical' is used here in the same way as it was used in the name of the Dutch *Radicale Bond*, which developed into the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* in 1901 – it referred to a political current flanked by liberalism on the one side and socialism on the other. In the Netherlands, this current was usually seen as the most progressive undercurrent of political liberalism, but in France, it was originally closer to socialism. The Dutch VDB was a sister party of Buisson's *Parti Républicain Radical et Radical-Socialiste*. See: Klijnsma, *Om de democratie*, 264-267, 578.

<sup>77</sup> S. Fath, *Du ghetto au réseau. Le protestantisme évangélique en France, 1800-2005* (Geneva 2005), 143, note 46.

<sup>78</sup> Cabanel, *Le Dieu de la République*, 209.

ministers.<sup>79</sup> As the labour movement in France was initially just as anti-religious as in the Netherlands, and as the French liberal Protestant community was just as bourgeois as the Dutch modernist movement, the same reasons that explain why liberal Protestantism failed to gain support among blue-collar workers in the Netherlands most likely also apply to France.<sup>80</sup>

#### 4. Switzerland

Just as those in the Netherlands, liberal Protestants in other countries founded associations patterned after the *Protestantenverein*. Because Tübingen, the German cradle of modern theology, was nearby and located in the same language area, German-speaking Switzerland proved to be fertile ground for liberal theological views. As of the 1850s, most professors at the theological faculties were teaching such views to their students, who, after graduation, began to preach these views from their pulpits. In Swiss Protestantism, at least among theologians and ministers, liberalism accordingly became the dominant current.<sup>81</sup> Orthodoxy, as elsewhere, did not reconcile itself to this situation just like that. In particular liberal attempts to render endorsement of church creeds optional came up against a wall of orthodox resistance.<sup>82</sup> When one of the champions of such an ecclesial reform, Swiss Reformed minister E.F. Langhans (1829-1880), was threatened with disciplinary measures by the highest ecclesial authority in the Reformed Church in the canton of Bern, he and his sympathisers joined forces in the *Kirchliche Reformverein des Kantons Bern* (Ecclesial Reform Association in the Canton of Bern) in 1866.<sup>83</sup> Liberal Protestants in other Swiss cantons, anticipating rather than combating orthodox antagonism, founded associations of their own as well, such as the *Aargauische Reformverein* (Reform Association in the Canton of Aargau) in 1868 and the *Religiös-liberale Verein des Kantons Sankt Gallen* (Religious-Liberal Association in the Canton of Sankt Gallen) in 1870.<sup>84</sup> At the instigation of Sankt Gallen minister C.W. Kambli (1829-1914), Basel minister A. Altherr (1843-1918) and Bern minister A. Bitzius (1835-1882), the last of whom had been involved with the founding of the *Reformverein* in his home canton in 1866, a national union of those cantonal associations came into being in 1871.<sup>85</sup> This *Schweizerischer Verein für freies*

<sup>79</sup> Within French Protestantism as a whole – not only among liberals –, Christian socialism remained a marginal phenomenon: “[L]e Christianisme social [...] reste marginal par rapport au protestantisme français.” Quoted from: J. Baubérot, ‘Tommy Fallot et ses continuateurs Élie Gounelle et Wilfred Monod. La fondation du Christianisme social’, in: M. Barot et al. (eds.), *Itinéraires socialistes chrétiens* (Geneva 1983), 15-31, there 20.

<sup>80</sup> There is no historiography on the relationship between liberal Protestantism and the labour movement in France. Of course, the fact that liberal Protestantism was such a tiny minority in France is also a reason why lower-class people, or any non-Protestants for that matter, were not eager to embrace it.

<sup>81</sup> U. Altermatt, F. Metzger and M. Wintle, ‘Protestant Dominance and Confessional Politics. Switzerland and the Netherlands’, in: S. Gilley and B. Stanley (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Christianity VIII. World Christianities, c. 1815-c. 1914* (Cambridge etc. 2006), 323-341, there 327-328.

<sup>82</sup> E. Campi, ‘Kirche und Theologie im Zürich des 19. Jahrhunderts’, in: E. Campi, R. Kunz and Chr. Moser (eds.), *Alexander Schweizer (1808-1888) und seine Zeit* (Zürich 2008), 59-76, there 73.

<sup>83</sup> G. Schönholzer, *Die religiöse Reformbewegung in der reformierten Schweiz. Denkschrift dem Schweizerischen Verein für freies Christentum gewidmet zum Gedächtnis seines 25jährigen Bestehens bei Anlaß der XIII. Generalversammlung am 7./8. September 1896 in Bern* (Zürich 1896), 28. The *Reformverein* was meant to be a faithful copy of the German *Protestantenverein*. See: G. Koffmane, *Abriss der Kirchengeschichte des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (Erlangen 1887), 141.

<sup>84</sup> ‘Reformtag in Flawyl und Biel’, *Allgemeine kirchliche Chronik XVIII* (1871), 6-8, there 6; R. Pfister, *Kirchengeschichte der Schweiz III. Von 1720 bis 1950* (Zürich 1985), 264. Schönholzer says that the *Aargauische Reformverein* was founded in 1870. See: Schönholzer, *Die religiöse Reformbewegung*, 39.

<sup>85</sup> C. Nöthiger-Strahm, *Der deutschschweizerische Protestantismus und der Landesstreik von 1918. Die Auseinandersetzung der Kirche mit der sozialen Frage zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Bern etc. 1981), 85. According to

*Christentum* (Swiss Association for Free Christianity) aimed at “popularising and advancing religious-liberal ambitions in our fatherland, modernising ecclesial doctrines and structures, [and] purifying the religious conceptions of our people in order to strengthen religious-moral life [in Switzerland] by educating them through the spoken and the written word.”<sup>86</sup> Under the flag of the *Verein*, liberal Protestants who had not yet done so decided to organise themselves on the cantonal level as well, for example in Appenzell Ausserrhoden in 1887.<sup>87</sup> As church life in Switzerland was organised along cantonal lines, liberal Protestants in the one canton accomplished more reforms than those in another canton. For instance, liberal Protestants in the canton of Geneva – a region where, because of its Francophone character, the *Verein für freies Christentum* was not represented<sup>88</sup> – managed to get doctrinal freedom formalised in their cantonal church body.<sup>89</sup> However, the other cantons in French-speaking Switzerland were generally more orthodox than those in the German-speaking part of the country.<sup>90</sup>

In accordance with kindred spirits elsewhere, the majority of liberal Protestants in Switzerland belonged to the bourgeoisie and had politically liberal leanings.<sup>91</sup> Likewise, they never managed to win over the masses to liberal Protestantism in their pursuit of social reform. Confronted with the emerging labour movement, particularly two of the founding fathers of the *Verein für freies Christentum*, the already-mentioned ministers Bitzius and Kambli, felt that solving the social question was the vocation, the duty even, of liberal Protestantism. According to Kambli, Bitzius considered social issues to be more pressing than theological and ecclesial ones. He saw that blue-collar workers were emancipating themselves – they were tired of waiting for the churches to come to their rescue and were taking the improvement

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Nöthiger-Strahm, this union was geographically limited to the *Ostschweiz*, a region consisting of the cantons of Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Appenzell Innerrhoden, Glarus, Sankt Gallen, Schaffhausen and Thurgau. Sometimes, the northernmost German-speaking part of the multilingual canton of Graubünden is also seen as belonging to *Ostschweiz*. Looking at the list of its founders, however, the national union of Swiss liberal Protestants had support outside of *Ostschweiz* as well: Zürich and Basel, for example, do not belong to this region. Nöthiger-Strahm probably uses the term ‘*Ostschweiz*’ while she actually refers to German-speaking Switzerland in its entirety or all German-speaking cantons east of Bern.

<sup>86</sup> “[...] den religiös-freisinnigen Bestrebungen im Vaterlande Eingang und Erfolg zu verschaffen, die kirchlichen Lehren und Einrichtungen zeitgemäss fortbilden zu helfen, durch Belehrungen in Wort und Schrift die religiösen Vorstellungen des Volkes zu läutern und dadurch das religiös-sittliche Volksleben zu stärken.” Quoted in: L. Vischer, L. Schenker and R. Dellsperger (eds.), *Ökumenische Kirchengeschichte der Schweiz* (Freiburg and Basel 1998), 238. The word ‘*Christentum*’ was also spelled as ‘*Christenthum*’. Lindeboom erroneously states that the *Verein* came into existence in 1866. See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 134. Evidently, he confuses this association with the *Reformverein* in Bern. Lindeboom is not the only author to struggle with the exact relationship between the *Reformverein* in Bern and the *Verein für freies Christentum*. Geiser states that the latter came to replace the former. See: S.H. Geiser, *Die Taufgesinnten Gemeinden im Rahmen der allgemeinen Kirchengeschichte* (Courgenay [1931] 1971), 476. In fact, the *Reformverein* in Bern, as well as the other cantonal associations of liberal Protestants, continued to exist as such, albeit as branches of the *Verein für freies Christentum*. See: Ph.A. von Segesser (V. Conzemius and S. Köppendorfer eds.), *Briefwechsel Philipp Anton von Segesser (1817-1888) V. 1869-1872* (Zürich and Cologne 1992), 203.

<sup>87</sup> Schonholzer, *Die religiöse Reformbewegung*, 39.

<sup>88</sup> Pfister says cantonal organisations of liberal Protestants in *Westschweiz* did not join the *Verein für freies Christentum*. See: Pfister, *Kirchengeschichte der Schweiz* III, 264. The region called ‘*Westschweiz*’ overlaps with the French-speaking part of Switzerland, also referred to as ‘*Romandie*’. As Schönholzer shows, there were several organisations similar to the Bern *Reformverein* located in *Romandie*. See: Schönholzer, *Die religiöse Reformbewegung*, 34-37.

<sup>89</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 134-135.

<sup>90</sup> P.W. Snyder, ‘Theological Instruction in Switzerland I’, *The Biblical World* 1.2 (February 1893), 109-118, there 111.

<sup>91</sup> ‘Buitenland – Geestverwanten in Zwitserland’, *De Hervorming* 1887-27 (2 July 1887), 107; Altermatt, Metzger and Wintle, ‘Protestant Dominance and Confessional Politics’, 328.

of their lot into their own hands. Bitzius regarded this as a positive process, yet was fearful of class antagonism: liberal Protestants should sympathise with blue-collar workers and help them to become independent citizens, without strengthening their class-consciousness. He therefore rejected engagement in politics that advanced only working-class interests – such politics set one class apart from the others and thus kept the existing gap between classes intact. Kambli, on the other hand, thought that liberal Protestants could engage in socialist politics, although personally he could not do so under the banner of a social democratic party, due to the materialistic and atheistic principles on which such a party was based. However, he accentuated that socialism as such was not inherently materialistic and atheistic: because socialism and liberal Protestantism both tried to free the individual from the chains that hindered him in his personal development – the chains of Mammon in the case of the former, the chains of dogmas in the case of the latter –, Kambli maintained that both belonged together. Social democratic parties should realise that the social question was a religious question, while liberal Protestants should come to see that social reform could never be accomplished without structural changes to the fabric of society.<sup>92</sup>

In her study on Swiss Protestantism and the social question around 1900, historian Nöthiger-Strahm calls Kambli “the theologian who has done pioneering work for that undercurrent in liberal theology that intensively concerned itself with social issues.”<sup>93</sup> As such, he and Bitzius both preceded and fostered the emergence of religious socialism in Switzerland in the early twentieth century.<sup>94</sup> One of the two leading men of religious socialism, L. Ragaz (1868-1945), had a liberal Protestant background; the other, H. Kutter (1863-1931), was theologically orthodox. Swiss religious socialists considered the notion of the Kingdom of God to be central to Christianity, which was, as such, not a revolutionary thought. However, contrary to what both orthodox and liberal Protestants generally believed at the time, they did not look at contemporary society as progressing towards the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God, but rather as *hindering* this fulfilment. There was no consensus among them regarding the question of which political consequences should result from this. Some, grouped around Kutter, saw social democratic parties as scourges with which God called the bourgeoisie to account for its lack of social concern, but simultaneously maintained that ministers should not become involved with them, based on a materialistic outlook on life as they were. The Kingdom of God would never be realised through the activities of a particular political party, let alone one in which the Word of God was disavowed. Other Swiss religious socialists, represented by Ragaz, contrariwise felt that, although they lacked an explicitly religious basis, social democratic parties furthered the ideal of social justice implied in the notion of the Kingdom of God, and were therefore convinced that ministers had a duty to join them.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Nöthiger-Strahm, *Der deutschschweizerische Protestantismus*, 114-120; Th. Widmer, *Die Schweiz in der Wachstums- und Krisenphase der 1880er Jahre* (Zürich 1992), 184.

<sup>93</sup> “Kambli ist derjenige Reformtheologe, der bahnbrechend wirkte für den Zweig der liberalen Theologie, die sich in spezifischem Ausmass um soziale Fragen kümmerte.” Quoted from: Nöthiger-Strahm, *Der deutschschweizerische Protestantismus*, 116.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 115, 119; K. Guggisberg, *Albert Bitzius 1835-1882. Wesen und Werk* (Bern 1935), 78; M. Mattmüller, *Leonhard Ragaz und der religiöse Sozialismus: eine Biographie I. Die Entwicklung der Persönlichkeit und des Werkes bis ins Jahr 1913* (Zürich 1957), 44.

<sup>95</sup> G.J. Dorrien, *Theology without Weapons. The Barthian Revolt in Modern Theology* (Louisville 2000), 39-41; A. Rich, *Business and Economic Ethics. The Ethics of Economic Systems* (Leuven 2006), 130-133; B.L. McCormack, *Theologische Dialektik und kritischer Realismus. Entstehung und Entwicklung von Karl Barths Theologie 1909-1936* (Zürich 2006), 117-118.

Notwithstanding Kambli's and Bitzius's role as predecessors, and Ragaz's role as one of the leaders of Swiss religious socialism, the number of liberal Protestant ministers who began to engage in socialist politics, among them Paul Brandt (1852-1910) and Paul Pflüger (1865-1947), remained rather small<sup>96</sup> – regarding their influence and numerical strength, they had a position in Swiss liberal Protestantism similar to the one the *Blijde Wereld* ministers had in the Dutch modernist movement. Moreover, the influence of liberal Protestantism within the Swiss religious socialist movement gradually diminished – as of the mid-1920s, the latter became permeated with Karl Barth's neo-orthodox theology, which was highly critical of liberal Protestantism.<sup>97</sup>

## 5. Alsace-Lorraine

In 1871, while they were at war with France, an alliance of German principalities unified into a single state, proclaiming the King of Prussia as the Emperor of unitary Germany. As 'spoils of war', Germany annexed the French region of Alsace and the easternmost part of the French region of Lorraine later that year. This event induced liberal Protestants living in these annexed regions to establish an organisation defending their interests in church life. Together with Languedoc in the south, Poitou-Charentes in the upper southwest and Normandy in the northwest, Alsace and East Lorraine were the regions in France with relatively high concentrations of Protestants.<sup>98</sup> Due to the proximity of the theological faculty in Strasbourg, which, contrary to the other French Protestant faculty in Montauban, was receptive to modern theology, Alsace and East Lorraine were hotbeds of *liberal* Protestantism: graduates from the faculty in Strasbourg easily found their way to the pulpits of the congregations in the surrounding area.<sup>99</sup> Yet, the changed political situation threatened liberals' position: German prime minister Otto von Bismarck (1815-1898) wanted to bring church life in Alsace-Lorraine into conformity with that in Germany. The German government was known for favouring orthodoxy, causing the liberal Protestant editors of the opinion magazine *Le Progrès Religieux* (*Religious Progress*) to call for action. On their initiative, the *Union évangélique protestante d'Alsace et de Lorraine* (Evangelical Protestant Union of Alsace and Lorraine), which intended "to further the [free] development of religious life in the Protestant churches of Alsace-Lorraine, to make possible the advancement of the Christian truth in a liberal sense, and to fight against religious intolerance

<sup>96</sup> Mattmüller, *Leonhard Ragaz* I, 45-46. Not all (liberal) Protestant ministers who joined the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland participated in the religious socialist movement; some were highly critical of the latter. See: F. Mauthner, *Der Atheismus und seine Geschichte im Abendlande* IV (Stuttgart and Berlin 1923), 378-379.

<sup>97</sup> McCormack, *Theologische Dialektik und kritischer Realismus*, 123; G. Hunsinger, *Conversational Theology. Essays on Ecumenical, Postliberal and Political Themes, with Special Reference to Karl Barth* (London etc. 2015), 180. In French-speaking Switzerland, religious socialism played a much smaller role than in German-speaking Switzerland. See: F. van Oirschot, *Beknopte geschiedenis der sociale kwestie. Ontstaan en oplossingen* (Roermond 1950), 284. Referring to *Romandie*, E. Rochat states that "liberal Protestantism, which appears to us as a logical consequence of the movement inaugurated by the great Reformers, has not been seized upon and accepted by the mass of the Protestant population." Quoted from: E. Rochat, 'The Condition of Liberal Protestantism in Romance Switzerland', in: Wendte (ed.), *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion*, 173-183, there 173-174.

<sup>98</sup> The historic region of Languedoc was larger than the administrative region that carried the name 'Languedoc-Roussillon' between 1982 and 2015. With the exception of Roussillon (coinciding with the Pyrénées-Orientales department), historic Languedoc also included the western part of the Midi-Pyrénées region.

<sup>99</sup> F. Hartweg, 'Protestantismus in Elsass-Lothringen', in: M. Grunewald, U. Puschner and H.M. Bock (eds.), *Das evangelische Intellektuellenmilieu in Deutschland, seine Presse und seine Netzwerke (1871-1963) – Le milieu intellectuel protestant en Allemagne, sa presse et ses réseaux (1871-1963)* (Bern 2008), 73-94, there 75-79. The faculty in Strasbourg, just as the one established in Paris in 1877, had a mixed Reformed-Lutheran character.

everywhere,” came into being in July 1871.<sup>100</sup> It was rechristened ‘*Union protestante libérale d’Alsace et de Lorraine*’ (‘Liberal Protestant Union of Alsace and Lorraine’) at the end of 1873, probably because the adjective ‘*évangélique*’ was too much associated with orthodoxy in both the French and the German language.<sup>101</sup> Contrary to liberal Protestants in France proper, those in Alsace-Lorraine were predominantly Lutheran.

An analysis of *Le Progrès Religieux*, issued since 1868 and bearing likeness to *De Hervorming* both in tone and content, shows that Alsatian liberal Protestants were engaged in similar discussions as Dutch modernists. They were equally preoccupied with finding answers to the questions of how to define ‘liberal Protestantism’; how to shape church life in such a way that liberals would no longer be obstructed by their orthodox antagonists, whilst maintaining opportunities to influence the latter; how to relate liberal Protestantism to the little religions; how to uplift the lower classes; how to manifest themselves in social life; and how to civilise non-Christians in the colonial world.<sup>102</sup> Just as in the Netherlands, a certain disappointment made itself felt among liberal Protestants in Alsace-Lorraine when it turned out that initial expectations had not been met: while they boasted to be the bearers of the true Protestant spirit, having no doubt whatsoever of accomplishing a second Reformation in church and society, in the 1870s they gradually became less confident that the future was theirs, complaining about increasing indifference – also in their own circles – and a lack of numerical growth, as of the 1880s.<sup>103</sup> The discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors was also used in *Le Progrès Religieux*. In many articles, it was argued that social reform could only be brought about if lower-class individuals were helped to become spiritually more developed. In line with that, the emergence of socialism, with its plea for changes in the fabric of society without individual reform, its materialistic outlook on life, and its anti-religious tendencies, was observed with concern.<sup>104</sup>

Although this reluctant attitude towards socialism was not accompanied by overt support for another political current, historian Steinhoff, in his study on Protestantism in Strasbourg during the German reign over Alsace, alleges that the *Union protestante libérale*, of which *Le*

<sup>100</sup> “Elle a pour but de seconder le mouvement religieux au sein des églises protestantes d’Alsace et de Lorraine, de faciliter le développement de la vérité chrétienne dans le sens libéral, et de combattre l’intolérance religieuse partout où elle se manifesterait.” Quoted from: ‘Strasbourg, le 5 août 1871’, *Le Progrès Religieux* IV.31 (5 August 1871), 241-242, there 241. See also: [Preface], *Ibid.* IV.30 (29 July 1871), 237; A.J. Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City. Protestantism and Religious Culture in Strasbourg, 1870-1914* (Leiden and Boston 2008), 55-82.

<sup>101</sup> ‘Strasbourg, le 22 novembre 1873’, *Le Progrès Religieux* VI.47 (22 November 1873), 370.

<sup>102</sup> Examples of discussions on church and social reform can be found in each issue of *Le Progrès Religieux*. For discussions on the *petites religions* and mission, see, e.g.: F. Dietsch, ‘Le libéralisme et les missions’, *Ibid.* II.10 (6 March 1869), 76-77; ‘L’œuvre des missions et le libéralisme’, *Ibid.* XVI.15 (14 April 1883), 114-115; ‘Des méthodes suivies par les missions du temps actuel’, *Ibid.* XVII.12 (22 March 1884), 92-94; ‘Les missions’, *Ibid.* XVIII.21 (23 May 1885), 162-164; XVIII.22 (30 May 1885), 170-172; ‘L’importance des missions païennes pour le temps présent’, *Ibid.* XX.2 (7 January 1887), 10-11; ‘Des conditions d’une mission efficace’, *Ibid.* XX.6 (5 February 1887), 41-46; ‘L’avenir des missions’, *Ibid.* XXIII.48 (29 November 1890), 377-378; ‘Le spiritisme’, *Ibid.* VIII.11 (13 March 1875), 82-85; ‘Spiritisme en christianisme’, *Ibid.* XXII.9 (2 March 1889), 65-68.

<sup>103</sup> E.g.: ‘La tâche du protestantisme dans la crise religieuse actuelle’, *Ibid.* II.52 (25 December 1869), 429-437; ‘La Réformation’, *Ibid.* VIII.44 (30 October 1875), 347-348; ‘La crise du protestantisme’, *Ibid.* X.4 (27 January 1877), 26-29; ‘Strasbourg, le 30 janvier 1886’, *Ibid.* XIX.5 (30 January 1886), 33-34.

<sup>104</sup> E.g.: ‘La question sociale’, *Ibid.* V.10 (9 March 1872), 73-74; ‘Socialisme et christianisme’, *Ibid.* XIII.11 (13 March 1880), 82-84; ‘Le but social du christianisme’, *Ibid.* XIV.5 (29 January 1881), 34-35; ‘Le salut social’, *Ibid.* XVII.32 (9 August 1884), 249-251; ‘Le progrès’, *Ibid.* XXI.6 (11 February 1888), 41-45; E. Picard, ‘Du rôle pratique du pasteur dans les questions sociales’, *Ibid.* XXII.8 (23 February 1889), 59-60. Moreover, liberal Protestants in Alsace-Lorraine criticised contemporary literature for lacking piety and morality, as did Dutch modernists. See, e.g.: C. Engel, ‘Le dilettantisme artistique et le sentiment religieux’, *Ibid.* XXII.15 (13 April 1889), 113-114.

*Progrès Religieux* was the mouthpiece, had been established to “protect liberal church and political interests.”<sup>105</sup> Other authors substantiate Steinhoff’s claim that Protestants in Alsace-Lorraine – they do not distinguish between orthodox and liberal Protestants – did indeed have liberal political sympathies, favouring the regional Liberal Democratic Party.<sup>106</sup> The constituency of this party had a middle-class background.<sup>107</sup> At the same time, socialist candidates, receiving a steadily growing amount of votes in Alsace-Lorraine from the 1890s onwards, also partially depended on Protestants for support.<sup>108</sup> Undoubtedly, some of these voters will have been *liberal* Protestants, suggesting that political socialism gradually became more accepted among liberal Protestants in Alsace, just as in the Netherlands.

If the readership that *Le Progrès Religieux* targeted serves as an indication of the social composition of the liberal Protestant community in Alsace-Lorraine, then it can safely be concluded that, as with similar communities elsewhere, this community had a (higher) middle-class basis. As Steinhoff writes, “the *Progrès* addressed a readership that was clearly *kulturprotestantisch*: theologically liberal, educated and bourgeois.”<sup>109</sup> Both in Alsace-Lorraine and elsewhere, orthodoxy was eager to stress this, implying that, contrary to what its adherents believed, liberal Protestantism would never become mainstream in society or church life. In 1878, for example, an orthodox Lutheran newspaper said that liberal Protestants in Alsace lacked public support. Although the editor-in-chief of *Le Progrès Religieux* responded that he did not doubt the ultimate triumph of liberalism over orthodoxy, maintaining that “even rural congregations are turning more and more away from orthodoxy and are calling for liberal ministers, while liberal publications have been favourably received in most of [those congregations],” it was rather obvious that liberal Protestants in Alsace had difficulty reaching the masses.<sup>110</sup> This was not only evinced by the number of articles in which the editors of *Le Progrès Religieux* were shown to struggle with the emergence of socialism and with uplifting the working classes in an effective way. It also became apparent during the annual meetings of the *Union protestante libérale*. Year after year, the complaint could be heard that the membership of the *Union* did not increase, that the so-called ‘*conférences de Saint-Nicolas*’, popular lectures on a wide variety of topics that the *Union* organised every winter, were attended poorly, and that *Le Progrès Religieux* failed to attract more subscribers.<sup>111</sup> As of 1892, this last problem even caused the

<sup>105</sup> Quoted from: Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City*, 372.

<sup>106</sup> E.g.: G. Koch and M. Lienhard, *Les protestants d’Alsace, du vécu au visible* (Strasbourg 1985), 46; R. Oberlé, *L’Alsace au temps du Reichsland 1871-1914* (Mulhouse 1990), 34; B.M. Kahn, *My Father Spoke French. Nationalism and Legitimacy in Alsace, 1871-1914* (New York and London 1990), 131.

<sup>107</sup> E. Reybell, ‘Le socialisme et la question d’Alsace-Lorraine’, *La Revue Socialiste* XXXIX (1904), 455-494, there 487.

<sup>108</sup> C. Baechler, *Le parti catholique alsacien 1890-1939, du Reichsland à la République Jacobine* (Paris 1982), 216; A. Carrol, ‘Socialism and National Identity in Alsace from Reichsland to République, 1890-1921’, *European History Quarterly* XIX.1 (2010), 57-78, there 61. For the other part, socialists largely depended on the support of voters who did not often go to church or had resigned their church membership altogether, although they also had some following among Catholics. See: J.M. Mayeur, *Autonomie et politique en Alsace. La constitution de 1911* (Paris 1970), 177; Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City*, 130.

<sup>109</sup> Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>110</sup> “...que les paroisses rurales elles aussi se détournent de plus en plus de l’orthodoxie et réclament des pasteurs libéraux, et que les publications libérales ont été favorablement accueillies par la plupart d’entre elles.” Quoted from: ‘Strasbourg, le 19 janvier 1878’, *Le Progrès Religieux* XI.3 (19 January 1878), 17-18, there 17.

<sup>111</sup> E.g.: R. Reuss, ‘Les conférences libérales’, *Ibid.* XV.1 (7 January 1882), 2-5, there 2; ‘La quinzième assemblée générale de l’Union protestante-libérale d’Alsace-Lorraine’, *Ibid.* XIX.50 (11 December 1886), 393-398; ‘La dix-huitième assemblée générale de l’Union protestante-libérale d’Alsace-Lorraine’, *Ibid.* XXIII.50 (13 December 1890), 393-394; ‘La dix-neuvième assemblée de l’Union protestante-libérale’, *Ibid.* XXIV.50 (12 December 1891), 393-394.

*Union* to stop issuing *Le Progrès Religieux* for good; it opted for strengthening the position in the Alsatian press of the German-language *Evangelisch-Protestantischer Kirchenbote* (Evangelical Protestant Church Messenger), which it had financially supported since 1872.<sup>112</sup>

The disappearance of its own French-language opinion magazine illustrated that the *Union protestante libérale* was beginning to lose a good deal of its significance in Alsatian church life. Combating orthodoxy became less necessary, as the German authorities did not manage to completely get rid of liberals at the administrative level of the Lutheran Church.<sup>113</sup> Steinhoff suggests that theological developments within Alsatian liberal Protestantism itself, motivated by dissatisfaction with nineteenth-century modern theology that seemed to resemble Dutch malcontents' and right-wing modernists' grievances, also weakened liberal opposition against orthodoxy.<sup>114</sup> Combating orthodoxy even lost its urgency after the French re-annexation of Alsace-Lorraine in 1919. To secure Alsatians' loyalty, the French government continued to treat the churches in Alsace-Lorraine in the same way that it had done before 1871, meaning that it did not enforce the separation of church and state. In France, this separation had led to an ultimate institutional split between Reformed orthodoxy on the one hand and Reformed liberals and moderates on the other hand. In Alsace-Lorraine, however, liberal and orthodox Lutherans had to find a *modus vivendi* to lay claim to state support, as the French government only recognised one undivided Lutheran Church. In 1924, both groups more or less decided to bury the hatchet: ministers and members had to accept the Augsburg confession as the official doctrinal basis of the Lutheran Church, but they did not have to endorse it to the letter.<sup>115</sup> The now formalised situation in the Alsatian Lutheran Church was thus, in practice, more or less the same as the situation that existed in the Dutch Reformed Church.

## 6. Hungary

Regarding the emergence of a liberal theological current in Hungary, which at the time also included Transylvania in present-day Romania, Dutch modern theology functioned as a booster.<sup>116</sup> Two of the first and most important ethnically Hungarian champions of liberal Protestantism, both of Transylvanian origin, studied in the Netherlands in the 1860s. Between

<sup>112</sup> It was supposed to have disappeared already in 1891. See: 'Strasbourg, le 3 janvier 1891', *Ibid.* XXIV.1 (3 January 1891), 1-2. A final issue appeared on 9 January 1892. See also: Steinhoff, *The Gods of the City*, 360.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-196.

<sup>114</sup> After all, he states: "With the maturation of a more moderate form of liberalism at the end of the century that paid more attention to the subjective dimension of religious belief and practice, the acuity of intraconfessional antagonism began to subside." *Ibid.*, 196. As Faber argues, the rise of malcontentism and right-wing modernism in the Netherlands had its equivalents abroad, in any case in Switzerland, France and the United Kingdom. See: Faber, *Rechts en links in het vrijzinnig Christendom*, 6-7.

<sup>115</sup> J.P. Willaime, *Profession: pasteur. Sociologie de la condition du clerc à la fin du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Geneva 1986), 75; C. Storne-Sengel, *Les protestants d'Alsace-Lorraine de 1919 à 1939. Entre les deux règnes* (Strasbourg 2003), 87-89, 159. Lindeboom, paying no further attention to liberal Protestantism in Alsace-Lorraine, even writes that there was full doctrinal freedom in the Alsatian churches in the 1930s, making the *Union protestante libérale*, to which he erroneously refers as "*Union évangélique protestante*", "sort of redundant" ("...in zekere zin overbodig..."). See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 151.

<sup>116</sup> E. Révész, J.S. Kovács and L. Ravasz, *Hungarian Protestantism. Its Past, Present and Future* (Budapest 1927), 42; Á.E. Sípos, "Bittet den Herrn der Ernte." Gyula Forgács (1879-1941): Pionier der ungarischen reformierten Innere Mission (Utrecht 2007), 99, 102. Hungarian Protestantism was not only influenced by Dutch modernism, but also by Dutch orthodoxy, especially neo-Calvinism. See: *Ibid.*, 104; B. Gaál, "Calvin's Truth" and "Hungarian Religion." Remembering a Reformer', in: J. de Niet, H.J. Paul and B.T. Wallet (eds.), *Sober, Strict and Scriptural. Collective Memories of John Calvin* (Leiden 2009), 97-124, there 119.



1863 and 1865, Albert Kovács (1838-1904) was a student in Utrecht, where C.W. Opzoomer lectured. As of late 1866, his brother Ödön Kovács (1844-1895) followed his example. Ödön Kovács later acknowledged that listening to Opzoomer, who also introduced him to J.H. Scholten's theological publications, "emotionally and intellectually satisfied me for the first time, giving a particular and firm foundation to my studies." In 1868, Ödön transferred to Leiden, to have the opportunity to hear Scholten, who would be his "example and guide" throughout his entire scholarly career, in person. He left Leiden in 1869, obtaining a doctorate, under A. Kuenen's supervision, with a thesis on contemporary Protestantism in Hungary.<sup>117</sup> Back in their native country, Albert and Ödön both lectured as professors in theology, making their Hungarian students acquainted with Dutch modern theology. Ödön kept in touch with his *Doktorvater* Kuenen, occasionally writing letters on developments in Hungarian church life. In one of these letters, he informed Kuenen about the founding of an association modelled after the German *Protestantenverein*.<sup>118</sup> Albert had initiated this with an 1870 pamphlet, in which he explained that, next to the threat orthodoxy constituted to the spread of liberal views in church life, there were two additional threats forcing liberal-minded Protestants in Hungary to organise themselves. These two threats were posed by "those who want to have faith without knowledge, and [those who want to have] knowledge without faith."<sup>119</sup> With the former, Albert Kovács referred to Roman Catholic priests, who were obliged to instruct their parishioners, a majority of the Hungarian people, in the 'obscurantist' teachings affirmed at the Vatican Council of 1868-1870. With the latter, he referred to German freethinkers and their supporters who, by making tours round the Hungarian countryside and making available a Hungarian translation of Ludwig Büchner's 1864 book *Kraft und Stoff (Force and Matter)*, tried to popularise a materialistic world view.<sup>120</sup> With the aid of one his colleagues at the theological faculty of the Hungarian Reformed Church in Pest, Mór Ballagi (1815-1891), Albert Kovács suited the action to the word and established the *Magyarországi Protestáns Egylet* (Hungarian Protestant Society) in October 1871.<sup>121</sup> The new association not only received expressions of sympathy from the Kovács brothers' fellow liberal members of the Hungarian Reformed Church; representatives of the Lutheran and Unitarian communities in Hungary also attended its inaugural meeting.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>117</sup> "...gemoed en verstand in mij voor 't eerst bevrediging vonden, waarop mijne studie eene bepaalde en vaste richting begon te nemen."; "...voorganger en leidsman..." Quoted in: F. Postma and T. Marjovszky, *Kovács Ödön hat ismeretlen levele Abraham Kuenen leideni professzorhoz / Zes onbekende brieven van Ödön Kovács aan Prof. Abraham Kuenen te Leiden* (Budapest 1997), 11-12.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>119</sup> Quoted in: A. Kovács, *The History of the Free Church of Scotland's Mission to the Jews and its Impact on the Reformed Church in Hungary* (Frankfurt am Main etc. 2006), 179.

<sup>120</sup> A. Kovács, *Alakítsunk egyházi reformegyletet* (Pest [1870] 2012); M. Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn, 1521-1978. Ungarns Reformationskirchen in Geschichte und Gegenwart II* (Vienna etc. 1979), 110.

<sup>121</sup> C.A. Schwarz, *Der ungarische Protestanten-Verein. Seine Entstehung und seine Wirksamkeit* (Budapest 1873), 22-39; Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn II*, 110; G.A. Kish, *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians. A History of the Baptists in the Kingdom of Hungary from 1846 to 1893* (Leiden 2012), 211. The Hungarian name is mentioned in: J. Zoványi and S. Ladányi, *Magyarországi protestáns egyháztörténeti lexikon* (Budapest 1977), 383. The town of Pest and the neighbouring town of Buda were united into one single municipality, named 'Budapest', in 1873.

<sup>122</sup> Kovács suggested naming the organisation '*Egyházi reformegyletet*' ('Church Reform Society'), but most attendants of the meeting preferred the more neutral name 'Hungarian Protestant Society'. See: Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn II*, 110.

The *Protestáns Egylet* aspired after “a renewal of religious and moral life in the spirit of Jesus and in accordance with the entire cultural advancement.”<sup>123</sup> It did so by advocating an anti-supernaturalist interpretation of the Gospel, absolute doctrinal freedom, and initiatives to intellectually, ethically and religiously uplift the Hungarian people.<sup>124</sup> This last endeavour to take up ‘home mission’ led the *Protestáns Egylet* to establish numerous public and school libraries and to engage in orphan care. By preaching a Christianity consistent with contemporary scientific and scholarly thinking, and attempting to show that social reform should be based on such a modernised Christianity in order to be successful, the leaders of the association tried to prevent the lower classes and particularly the cultured class from becoming estranged from religious life.<sup>125</sup> Their aim to reform church life and society on the basis of liberal Protestant principles was not only intended to preserve the relevance of Christianity in the age to come – it also had a nationalistic intent. The *Protestáns Egylet* therefore more closely resembled the ‘mother’ of all modernist associations in Europe, the *Protestantenverein*, than the NPB.<sup>126</sup> Four years before the founding of the *Protestáns Egylet*, Hungary had been given a status equal to Austria within the Habsburg-Danubian Monarchy. Although discomfort with the political and cultural dominance of the Austrian Germans within the monarchy, fuelled by a general trend among European ethnic groups to stress their unique cultural features, had not been limited to Hungarians, the latter were the only ethnic minority subjected to Habsburg rule receiving more autonomy. In what now came to be called ‘Transleithania’, consisting of present-day Hungary, Romanian Transylvania, Serbian Vojvodina, Slovakia and Croatia, the now semi-independent Hungarian administration aspired after a ‘Magyarisation’ of social and cultural life: it promoted the use of the Hungarian language at the expense of German and minority languages, and the advancement of a single Hungarian identity in multi-ethnic Transleithania.<sup>127</sup> Liberal-minded Hungarian Protestants considered their interpretation of Christianity to be a defining characteristic of this Hungarian identity, juxtaposing their image of a progressive Protestant Hungary with that of a conservative Roman Catholic Austria. They believed that their interpretation of Christianity was broad enough to be acceptable to Reformed Hungarians, Unitarian Transylvanians, Catholic Hungarians, Slovaks and Croats, and the Serbian Orthodox population of Vojvodina. In their view, a Magyarisation of Transleithania could hence only succeed if it had a liberal Protestant basis.<sup>128</sup> The *Protestáns Egylet* was intended to contribute to that.<sup>129</sup>

<sup>123</sup> A.M. Kool, *God Moves in a Mysterious Way. The Hungarian Protestant Foreign Mission Movement, 1756-1951* (Zoetermeer 1993), 48-49.

<sup>124</sup> F. Schuler von Libloy, *Protestantisches Kirchenrecht, vornehmlich das der Evangelischen Ausburger Bekenntnisses in Siebenbürgen* (Hermannstadt 1871), 141-142.

<sup>125</sup> Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn II*, 110-112; Kish, *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians*, 210.

<sup>126</sup> It was called “*eine genaue Kopie*” (“a faithful copy”) of the German *Protestantenverein*. Quoted from: F. Valjavec (K.A. Fischer and M. Bernath eds.), *Ausgewählte Aufsätze* (Munich 1963), 391. See also: Révész, Kovács and Rávasz, *Hungarian Protestantism*, 42; K. Fitschen, *Protestantische Minderheitskirchen in Europa im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig 2008), 125.

<sup>127</sup> J.W. Mason, *The Dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, 1867-1918* (London and New York [1985] 2013), 17-18.

<sup>128</sup> Orthodox Hungarian Protestants, by contrast, did not have the intention of furthering magyarisation through preaching and conducting home mission; in their religious activities, they were only concerned with saving souls through Christ. See: Kish, *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians*, 209, note 89.

<sup>129</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme III*, 182; Kovács, *The History of the Free Church of Scotland's Mission to the Jews* 181; Kish, *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians*, 209-210.

Just as in the Netherlands, liberal Protestants in Hungary did not agree with each other as to *how* church life and society should be reformed. However, contrary to their Dutch counterparts, they felt this to be an insurmountable problem, as a result of which “the best of the strength of its [of the *Protestáns Egylet*, TK] very founders and leaders was wasted in passionate and futile controversies, not even always concerning problems of theology and faith, but much more frequently matters of church and school politics.”<sup>130</sup> The *Protestáns Egylet* failed to attract large support in liberal circles: at its height, it consisted of only seventeen local branches and less than one thousand members.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, the ecclesial policy of the secular authorities thwarted the development of a liberal current in Hungarian church life.<sup>132</sup> Inner discord, combined with a lack of sympathisers and government obstructions, caused the Hungarian League of Protestants to practically become defunct in 1875, barely four years after its founding. However, its short presence in Hungarian church life did have a lasting effect: it contributed to increasing public interest in religious matters and increasing the assertiveness of orthodoxy.<sup>133</sup> Dealing with the fourth quarter of the nineteenth century, historiography on Protestantism in Hungary suggests that liberals did not play a major role in the Reformed Church as of this period. After 1875, a ‘liberal’ view on religious differences, not necessarily liberal theological views as such, could primarily be found among the ethnically Hungarian members of the Unitarian Church in Transylvania.<sup>134</sup>

## 7. Sweden

Another association modelled after the *Protestantenverein* was founded in Sweden in 1882. At the time, the Lutheran established churches in Scandinavia, being flanked by only a tiny number of other churches, were conservative in both a doctrinal and liturgical respect. Though they had always been strongly oriented towards Germany, the cradle of Lutheranism, they were not receptive to the historical-critical studies conducted at German theological faculties.<sup>135</sup> Just as in Britain, the government in Sweden looked at liberal Protestantism, with its pursuit of ecclesial and social reform, as a potential threat to the civil order. The few non-established churches in Sweden were as yet too small and too insignificant to develop into the boosters of such reform, such as the Unitarians in Britain.<sup>136</sup> Attempts to shape a liberal Protestant community were nonetheless made. As early as 1871, later Nobel Peace Prize winner K.P. Arnoldson (1844-1916) founded the organisation *Sanningssökarna* (Truth Seekers) in Gothenburg to study and promote American Unitarianism. Soon thereafter, a second Truth Seekers association came into being in Stockholm.<sup>137</sup> Six years later, Arnoldson and his ally A.F. Åkerberg (1833-1901) began to issue the monthly

<sup>130</sup> Quoted from: Révész, Kováts and Ravasz, *Hungarian Protestantism*, 42.

<sup>131</sup> A theological book series that the leaders of the *Protestáns Egylet* set up continued to be issued until 1889. See: Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn* II, 112-113.

<sup>132</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 182.

<sup>133</sup> Révész, Kováts and Ravasz, *Hungarian Protestantism*, 42; Bucsay, *Der Protestantismus in Ungarn* II, 112; Kish, *The Origins of the Baptist Movement Among the Hungarians*, 216.

<sup>134</sup> E.M. Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism. In Transylvania, England, and America* (Boston [1945] 1978), 156-157, 162-165; C.M. Geels, *Tochtgenoten in vrijzinnigheid. Korte studie inzake theologische ontwikkelingen bij de Unitarische Kerk van Transsylvanië* (Utrecht 2003), 11-16.

<sup>135</sup> K. Scott Latourette, *Christianity in a Revolutionary Age: A History of Christianity in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* II. *The Nineteenth Century in Europe: The Protestant and Eastern Churches* (London 1959), 131, 179.

<sup>136</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 177.

<sup>137</sup> E. Rodhe, *Den religiösa liberalismen. Nils Ignell, Viktor Rydberg, Pontus Wikner* (Stockholm 1935), 404-405; B.R. Ståhl and B. Persson, *Kulter, Sekter, Samfund. En studie av religiösa minoriteter i Sverige* (Stockholm 1971), 210.

periodical *Sanningssökaren* (*The Truth Seeker*), which was, as stated in its subtitle, devoted to “a belief in human Reason and practical Christianity” and contained a mixture of articles on modern theology and social issues.<sup>138</sup>

The *Sanningssökarna* associations in Gothenburg and Stockholm did not inspire liberal-minded Protestants elsewhere in Sweden to found similar associations, and even seem to have quickly ceased to exist.<sup>139</sup> In an 1880 article in *Sanningssökaren*, layman N. Månsson therefore called for a new attempt to bring a liberal current into being in Swedish Protestantism.<sup>140</sup> While Månsson felt that leaving the established Lutheran Church was the best way to do this, Arnoldson wrote in an editorial in *Sanningssökaren* that he disagreed, fearing that liberal religious views would otherwise only circulate among a small sectarian group and would never permeate Swedish church life in its entirety. Respecting Månsson’s opinion, Arnoldson drafted a document containing the rules and regulations of an association-to-be that would unite all religiously liberal-minded Swedes, both those with and without church membership. In late 1880, religious liberals in Jönköping and Gothenburg founded two separate associations based on Arnoldson’s draft.<sup>141</sup> In January 1882, Unitarian-minded nobleman V. Pfeiff (1829-1901), who had recently replaced Arnoldson and Åkerberg as the general editor of *Sanningssökaren*, took the initiative to unite these associations in Jönköping and Gothenburg and to found new ones all across Sweden under the banner of a national organisation of religious liberals. He convened a meeting in Stockholm during which he explained what the aims of this national organisation should be: it should bring into being the religious community of the future by propagating an anti-supernaturalist notion of God, fostering a strong sense of humanity and helping the Swedes to develop a higher moral sense. A minority of those present at the meeting objected to the reference to God in the proposed objectives of the organisation-to-be, and decided to stand aloof. At a second meeting convened a month later, others, led by philosopher C.F.B. von Bergen (1838-1897), felt that the organisation-to-be should make explicit mention of Christianity in its bylaws and should devote itself to propagating the results of modern, historical-critical Biblical studies. Pfeiff strongly opposed such a focus on the Bible as the only foundation of religious life, inducing Von Bergen and his sympathisers to go their own way. In

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<sup>138</sup> “Förnuftstro och praktisk kristendom.”

<sup>139</sup> Rodhe states that an organisation called ‘*Sanningssökarna*’ in Gothenburg merged with another organisation, *Missionen för förnuftstro*, about which more is said below, in 1884. Based on another historian’s account, the association in Gothenburg to which Rodhe refers here was, confusingly enough, another organisation than the one with the same name founded in the same city in 1871. This author, J. Janson, writes that an organisation called ‘*Sanningssökarnes i Göteborg Förening*’ was founded in 1881 and was renamed ‘*De Förnuftstroendes Samfund*’ in 1884. See: J. Janson, *Debatten om civiläktenskapets införande i Sverige* (Stockholm 1964), 135, note 78. About the further development of the *Sanningssökarna* branches established in Gothenburg and Stockholm in 1871 nothing is known. They probably did not exist anymore in 1880. To complicate things even further, a Spiritist association called ‘*Sällskapet Sanningssökarna*’ was founded in Sweden in 1904. See: K. Granholm, *Embracing the Dark. The Magic Order of Dragon Rouge: Its Practice in Dark Magic and Meaning Making* (Åbo 2005), 104.

<sup>140</sup> H.U. Meyboom, ‘Buitenland – Moderne theologie in Zweden’, *De Hervorming* 1882-36 (9 September 1882), 143-144, there 144; 1882-37 (16 September 1882), 147-148, there 147. Meyboom says his first name was Måns, while Rodhe states his first name was Nils.

<sup>141</sup> H.U. Meyboom, ‘Buitenland – Moderne theologie in Zweden’, *Ibid.* 1882-50 (16 December 1882), 199. Rodhe does not mention this fact. Because Meyboom does not give any references, it is unclear on which sources his account is based. Maybe he refers to the (second) *Sanningssökarna* association in Gothenburg founded in, as Janson mentions, 1881. Again, it remains a mystery what happened to the (first) *Sanningssökarna* association in Gothenburg established in 1871, a fact Ståhl/Persson and Rodhe mention, and whether the first and second *Sanningssökarna* associations had any relation to each other at all.

May 1882, Von Bergen established the *Svenska Protestantföreningen* (Swedish Protestant Association). By choosing this name, he hoped that the *Protestantenverein* and its sister associations outside of Germany would support him instead of Pfeiff.<sup>142</sup> The latter, in turn, founded the *Missionen för förnuftstro* (Missionary Society for the Advancement of a Rational Faith) in July 1882.<sup>143</sup> From then on, there were two organisations in Sweden, one having a slightly broader basis than the other, that basically aspired after the same goal: to liberate the Swedish people from orthodox conceptions of God in order to enable their religious lives to develop freely.<sup>144</sup>

The organisational split within the tiny group of religious liberals – both the *Svenska Protestantföreningen* and the *Missionen för förnuftstro* only had a handful of members – hindered this group from actually taking concrete action to advance religious liberalism in Sweden. Moreover, while Pfeiff and Von Bergen had both been oriented towards American Unitarianism beforehand, the former developed an interest in Theosophy and the latter even began to set himself up as propagandist for Theosophical and Spiritist ideas in the course of the 1880s. Spiritually, they moved further and further away from liberal Protestantism.<sup>145</sup> Von Bergen, echoing what leading Dutch intellectuals had also put forward, had come to realise that liberal Protestantism was merely a half-hearted attempt to harmonise Christian conceptions of the divine with contemporary science and scholarly thinking. Those conceptions only made sense in a pre-modern world view, which science had definitively refuted. Instead of maintaining the conceptual frame of Christianity and trying to attribute new, rational meanings to it, science and religion should be brought to an entirely new synthesis. Von Bergen believed that Theosophy did just this.<sup>146</sup> As the founders of the *Svenska Protestantföreningen* and the *Missionen för förnuftstro* were now oriented towards occult spirituality, the advancement of a Swedish ‘modernist movement’ in the late nineteenth century was nipped in the bud.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>142</sup> E.N. Tigerstedt, *Det religiösa problemet i modern finlands-svensk litteratur* (Helsingfors 1939), 65.

<sup>143</sup> Meyboom translated this in Dutch as ‘*Vereeniging voor inwendige zending*’. Rodhe is the only author to mention the name ‘*Missionen för förnuftstro*’.

<sup>144</sup> ‘Buitenland – Een Protestantenverein in Zweden’, *De Hervorming* 1882-20 (20 May 1882), 79; H.U. Meyboom, ‘Buitenland – Moderne theologie in Zweden’, *Ibid.* 1882-50 (16 December 1882), 199; 1882-51 (23 December 1882), 203-204; ‘Bergen, Carl Fredrik Berndt von’, in: *Folkets Bok. Ordbok för nyttig kunskap* X-XI (Stockholm 1883), 631-680, there 671-680; ‘Uit Zweden’, *De Protestant* II.30 (26 July 1884), 2; Rodhe, *Den religiösa liberalismen*, 429-432; U. Wittrock, *Ellen Keys väg från kristendom till livstro* (Uppsala 1953), 276.

<sup>145</sup> Rodhe, *Den religiösa liberalismen*, 439-441; G. Weidel, *Helgon och gengångare. Gestaltningen av kärlek och rättvisa i Selma Lagerlöfs diktning* (Lund 1964), 195; E. Szalczar, ‘The Modes of the Spirit. Poetic Application of Theosophical Ideas in the Works of August Strindberg’, in: B.I. Brown (ed.), *Nordic Experiences. Exploration of Scandinavian Cultures* (Westport and London 1997), 39-46, there 39. Rodhe remarks that Pfeiff’s association merged with *Sanningssökarna* in Gothenburg – which was, according to Janson, not the same as the one founded in 1871 – in 1884. Both organisations were renamed ‘*De Förnuftstroendes Samfund*’ (‘The Society of Rational Believers’). See: Rodhe, *Den religiösa liberalismen*, 434. Swedish liberal Protestantism as a whole was strongly influenced by American Unitarianism. See: W.R. Hutchison, ‘The Hinge of History. Fredrika Bremer’s American Reports and the Course of Swedish Liberalism’, *Swedish Missiological Themes* XCIII.2 (2005), 227-244. The exact year in which the Swedish *Protestantföreningen* ceased to exist is unknown. F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. made reference to the association in an article published in *De Hervorming* in 1888, but it probably did not exist anymore at the time. See: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. in:] ‘Binnenland – Buitenlandsche afdeelingen van den bond’, *De Hervorming* 1888-10 (10 March 1888), 39.

<sup>146</sup> Mentioned in: E. Szalczar, ‘Strindberg och Georg Ljungström. En teosofisk bekantskap’, *Strindbergiana* XIII (1998), 37-48.

<sup>147</sup> ‘Buitenland – Uit Zweden’, *De Hervorming* 1889-39 (28 September 1889), 155.

## 8. Estonia

The *Protestantliku Ühingu* (Protestant Society) that came into being in Estonia in 1925 was a last association modelled after the *Protestantenverein*.<sup>148</sup> Its leading men, Tallinn minister Theodor Tallmeister (1889-1947) and Iisaku minister Voldemar Kuljus (1898-1979), were the first to publicly demand the right to preach modern theological views in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Tallmeister and Kuljus, the former of whom had already established the opinion magazine *Protestantline Ilm* (*The Protestant World*) in 1923 as a means to spread such views, perceived a growing religious indifference among the Estonian people and felt that the Lutheran Church should reform itself doctrinally and institutionally in order to turn the tide. The founding of the *Protestantliku Ühingu* was intended to let liberal-minded Lutherans join forces and particularly to bridge the gap between church life and intellectual life.<sup>149</sup> A year after its creation, the *Protestantliku Ühingu* consisted of approximately twenty branches. With the exception of the branch in the university town of Tartu, which often invited professors to give lectures and managed to gain a foothold in the local student population, these branches seem to have existed only on paper. Their sphere of activity was confined to the few congregations with liberal-minded members.<sup>150</sup> The ecclesial authorities nonetheless regarded them as disruptive elements within the Estonian Lutheran community, prohibiting ministers who showed sympathy with the *Protestantliku Ühingu* from climbing the pulpit. Kuljus was therefore suspended in 1925 and, because he continued to lead religious services after his suspension, was expelled from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1926. For being loyal to Kuljus, the entire congregation in the Northeast Estonian town of Iisaku met with the same fate in 1931. Tallmeister managed to frustrate an impeachment procedure, but he could not prevent his congregation in Tallinn from being deprived of its right to share in decision-making at the national church level that same year.<sup>151</sup>

Also in 1931, the *Protestantliku Ühingu* was accepted as a member in the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom, to which the first section of this chapter has already referred and about which more is said below.<sup>152</sup> However, it soon lost a good deal of its significance. Still in 1931, negotiations between Tallmeister and Kuljus on the one hand and representatives of the moderately orthodox and conservatively orthodox wings of the Estonian Lutheran Church were started. A compromise was reached in 1934. The liberals were now willing to accept the doctrinal basis of the church, as new state regulations threatened to deprive them of their church buildings. In turn, the newly appointed highest bishop in the Estonian Lutheran Church, the moderately orthodox H.B. Rahamägi (1886-1941), was willing to tolerate modern theological views for the sake of ecclesial unity. He wanted to prevent factional quarrels from intensifying, otherwise fearing that the position of the church in its relation to the government would become weaker. Kuljus and the Iisaku congregation were welcomed back into the church, while all charges against Tallmeister were dropped and his congregation

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<sup>148</sup> A. Pärsimägi, 'Romaanist "Kutsutud ja seatud" ja tema saamisloost', in: M. Metsanurk (A. Pärsimägi ed.), *Valitud teosed / Soosaare. Kutsutud ja seatud* (Tallinn 1969), 591-597, there 593.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*; J. Aunver, 'Some Characteristic Spiritual Aspects of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church', in: J. Aunver and A. Vööbus (eds.), *Charisteria Iohanni Köpp. Octogenario oblato* (Stockholm 1954), 241-261, there 257.

<sup>150</sup> P. Rothmets, *Teoloogilised voolud Eesti Evangeeliumi Luteri Usu Kirikus aastatel 1917-1934* (Tartu 2012), 482.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, 483; M. Ketola, *The Nationality Question in the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, 1918-1939* (Helsinki 2000), 277.

<sup>152</sup> 'The St. Gall Meeting', *The Christian Leader* XXXV (17 September 1932), 1058.

in Tallinn was once again treated similarly to all other congregations.<sup>153</sup> Though it was no longer needed as an inner-church pressure group, the *Protestantliku Ühingu* did not immediately disappear. It presumably continued to exist until 1940 – the same year in which the Soviet occupation of Estonia put an end to the issuing of *Protestantline Ilm*, called ‘*Protestantlik Maailm*’ (which also translates as ‘*The Protestant World*’) since Kuljus became its editor in 1935.<sup>154</sup> The *Protestantliku Ühingu* was unsuccessful in realising its ambition to win back intellectuals for church life, but it did manage to increase the latter’s interest in religious issues as such.<sup>155</sup>

## 9. Unitarians in the United Kingdom and the United States

While modern theological principles were also adhered to in non-Unitarian church communities in the United Kingdom and the United States, the Unitarians centred around the British and Foreign Unitarian Association (BFUA) and the American Unitarian Association (AUA) were the only Protestants in the Anglo-Saxon world who established relations with the NPB and the other associations modelled after the *Protestantenverein* in the countries reviewed above. Both founded on 26 May 1825, these Unitarian associations coordinated activities on behalf of Unitarian congregations in Britain and the United States, which were formally entirely autonomous and hence not subject to the synodal authority of a larger ecclesial body. Membership of the BFUA and the AUA was accordingly reserved for individuals, but as of 1884 an amendment to its articles of association turned the AUA into an association that could only be joined by congregations, and as such turned it into the *de facto* national Unitarian denomination in America.<sup>156</sup>

Although the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was not God incarnated was basically as old as Christianity itself, a specific current within theology and a specific group of congregations named ‘Unitarian’ only came into being soon after the Reformation, first in Poland and Transylvania. Early Unitarians adhered to the unity of God, stressed that salvation was not reserved for a small predestined circle of elect and believed, in accordance with their emphasis on man’s free will, that humans are capable of good and evil rather than innately wicked. They still adhered to the principle of *sola Scriptura*, regarding the Bible to be the only source through which God can be known.<sup>157</sup> These ideas, particularly as specified in the works of theologian Faustus Socinus, entered England via the Netherlands, where a significant amount of persecuted Polish Unitarians had gone into exile. In England, freedom of worship was not granted to those denying the Trinity until 1813, hindering Unitarianism from gaining a firm foothold there. However, already in the course of the eighteenth century, the Enlightenment and its rationalist approach to reality had fostered a climate favourable to Unitarian ideas in so-called non-conformist circles – circles of Protestants who did not adhere to the creeds of the established Church of England. In spite of the prohibition against it, some theologians, the most prominent of whom was non-conformist minister Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), avowed

<sup>153</sup> Rothmets, *Teoloogilised voolud Eesti Evangeeliumi Luteri*, 483-484; Pärsimägi, ‘Romaanist “Kutsutud ja seatud” ja tema saamisloost’, 594.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*; T. Päädem, ‘Estonia’, in: H.J. Hillerbrand (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Protestantism II* (New York and London 2004), 684-687, there 686.

<sup>155</sup> Aunver, ‘Some Characteristic Spiritual Aspects’, 257.

<sup>156</sup> A. Greenwood and M.W. Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions* (Cambridge 2011), 140-141.

<sup>157</sup> For the early history of Unitarianism in Transylvania, see: Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism. In Transylvania, England, and America*, 16-43.

their Unitarian views. In London in 1774, Priestley helped Anglican minister Theophilus Lindsey (1723-1808) to found the first English congregation with the name of ‘Unitarian’ and thus the first English congregation in which an anti-Trinitarian interpretation of Christianity was openly preached. Soon afterwards, other Unitarian congregations emerged elsewhere in England.<sup>158</sup>

In the United States, first and foremost among Congregationalists and in reaction to the fire and brimstone preaching of the First Great Awakening that was sweeping New England at the time, rationalist Enlightenment thinking also nourished susceptibility to Unitarian theology in the course of the eighteenth century. An Anglican congregation in Boston was the first in the United States to reinstitute itself as ‘Unitarian’ in 1785. After migrating from Britain to Pennsylvania in 1794, Joseph Priestley furthered the cause of Unitarianism in America, founding a Unitarian congregation in Philadelphia in 1796. Yet, while Priestley followed Socinus in denouncing that Christ had existed as a being prior to the birth of Jesus, most Protestants with Unitarian leanings in New England adhered to the Christology named after the non-Trinitarian priest Arius (250/256-336), in which Christ was said to have already existed as the God-created, incorporeal *Logos* even before the creation of the world. Priestley was therefore not in a position to actually take the lead in the emergence of a Unitarian current in American Protestantism. Congregationalist minister William Ellery Channing (1780-1842), whose Christological views were Arian, came to head the first-generation American Unitarians. Although Channing was not after a denominational split, Unitarian-minded ministers and congregations, already numbering more than one hundred in the early 1820s, had such a controversial position in Congregationalist circles that a schism was inevitable, resulting in the founding of the AUA.<sup>159</sup> Channing and his fellow Unitarian contemporaries had religious beliefs that were Christocentric – they saw Jesus as the person in whom the divine Christ, the *Logos*, became flesh, albeit *not* as one in being with God – and that have been compared to those of the *Groningen* theologians dealt with in chapter 1.<sup>160</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century, those ideas identified as ‘modernist’ in chapter 1 became dominant in the Unitarian community.<sup>161</sup>

The influence of British Unitarianism on the Dutch modernist movement made itself particularly felt in the field of welfare work. Although Unitarians were not the only British Protestants engaged in what has been specified as ‘*toynbeewerk*’ in chapter 6, it was in large part through their contacts with British Unitarians that Dutch modernists became acquainted with this kind of social assistance. Liberal Protestants who urged the NPB to address itself to welfare work held up Unitarians in the United Kingdom as an example. One of the most notable among the former, E.C. Knappert, concerned herself with several social initiatives for which she asked NPB members’ full support, by accentuating the strong involvement of the numerically small Unitarian community in similar initiatives in Britain. For example, Knappert praised Unitarians for establishing community centres in working-class areas, and stimulated NPB branches to do the

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<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 280-315.

<sup>159</sup> Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* II, 1-43.

<sup>160</sup> Vanderlaan, *Protestant Modernism in Holland*, 120; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 167; Cossee, *Verwantschap en verwijdering*, 10-16.

<sup>161</sup> For German theological influences on American Unitarianism, see: J.H. Allen, ‘The Contact of American Unitarianism and German Thought’, in: *Unitarianism, Its Origin and History. A Course of Sixteen Lectures Delivered in Channing Hall, Boston, 1888-89* (Boston 1890), 97-115.



same.<sup>162</sup> She managed to persuade the branch in her then hometown of Leiden to found a centre for *toynbeewerk*, named ‘*Geloof, Hoop, Liefde*’ (‘Faith, Hope, Love’), in the vicinity of the local cotton mill, in 1894.<sup>163</sup> Knappert, and those who shared her ideal of integrating welfare work within the framework of the national NPB, felt particularly inspired by two social reformers with strong connections to British Unitarianism: Octavia Hill (1838-1912), whose aim to make the living conditions of the working classes healthier was referred to in the discussion on district nursing, and Mary Augusta Ward (1851-1912), whose 1888 novel *Robert Elsmere* portrayed a Unitarian-minded minister with a social reform agenda.<sup>164</sup> The latter, better known by her pen name ‘Mrs. Humphry Ward’, was an advocate of a particular kind of *toynbeewerk* for which Knappert’s housemate H. Oort broke a lance: university extension, a form of adult education in which university professors shared their knowledge with people from the lower classes.<sup>165</sup>

British Unitarians not only served as an example to Dutch modernists regarding *toynbeewerk*, which, as chapter 6 has explained, was supposed to put free piety into practice with no ulterior motive whatsoever to ‘convert’ people to liberal Protestantism. Dutch modernists also copied British Unitarians in creating an initiative that did have the intention of making propaganda for liberal Protestantism. In order to spread liberal Protestant principles, conceptions of God, and ideas on a wide variety of topics, especially among the lower classes, British Unitarians put advertisements in newspapers in which they offered to lend books to anyone interested. This ‘postal mission’ or ‘post-office mission’, led by Florence Hill (1843-1935), Octavia Hill’s sister, was thus a library service by mail, the crucial aspect of which was the correspondence between those responding to the ads and the Unitarian ‘postal missionaries’. This correspondence was intended to give the latter information about the respondent’s class background, level of education and spiritual needs, in accordance with which they had to select the ‘proper’ literature.<sup>166</sup> As in the cases of community centres and district nursing, it was, in the case of postal mission, again E.C. Knappert who incited her fellow Dutch modernists to follow British Unitarians.<sup>167</sup> While she failed to convince NPB branches to found community centres and to get district nursing centrally organised under the banner of the NPB – as analysed in chapter 6, the NPB wanted to

<sup>162</sup> E.C. Knappert, ‘Wat onze geestverwanten in Amerika en in Engeland uitrichten onder de laagste volksklassen’, *De Hervorming* 1896-26 (27 June 1896), 101-102; 1896-27 (4 July 1896), 105-106; 1896-28 (11 July 1896), 110-111.

<sup>163</sup> H. van Veen, ‘Knappert, Emilie Charlotte’, in: P.J. Meertens et al. (eds.), *Biografisch woordenboek van het socialisme en de arbeidersbeweging in Nederland* III (Amsterdam 1988), 95-98, there 97.

<sup>164</sup> E.g.: J.H. Maronier, ‘Robert Elsmere’, *De Hervorming* 1888-29 (21 July 1888), 114-115; B.B., ‘Het “volkspaleis” in het East-End van Londen’, *Ibid.* 1890-30 (26 July 1890), 118; ‘Buitenland – Mevrouw Humphry Ward’, *Ibid.* 1894-40 (6 October 1894), 159-160; I.M.J. Hoog, ‘Een toekomst - ...droom?’, *Ibid.* 1898-30 (23 July 1898), 119. Octavia Hill was raised in a Unitarian family, but baptised and confirmed in the Church of England. Although she was Anglican, Mary Augusta Ward had Unitarian beliefs and moved in Unitarian circles. See: G. Darley, *Octavia Hill* (London 1990), 48; W.S. Peterson, *Victorian Heretic. Mrs. Humphry Ward’s “Robert Elsmere”* (Leicester 1976), 201.

<sup>165</sup> E.g.: *Handelingen NPB* 1892, 39-47. Oort put university extension to test in the NPB branch in Rotterdam in 1894. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – “University Extension” in Rotterdam’, *De Hervorming* 1893-42 (21 October 1893), 167; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Hooger onderwijs buiten de universiteit’, *Ibid.* 1894-01 (6 January 1894), 2. Oort failed to rouse much interest in university extension in the NPB, as branches did not know how to organise it. See: H. Oort, ‘Onze leestafel – “Drie eeuwen van strijd”’, *Ibid.* 1896-01 (4 January 1896), 3-4, there 4; Q.N., ‘Binnenland – Hooger onderwijs buiten de universiteit’, *Ibid.* 1896-02 (11 January 1896), 6.

<sup>166</sup> For a history of the British Unitarian Postal Mission, see: H.G. Chancellor, *Florence Hill and the Postal Mission* (London [1936]). Unitarian minister R. Travers Herford had already brought the Unitarian post office mission to the attention of Dutch modernists at the 1889 NPB meeting. Mentioned in: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – De colportage-commissie’, *De Hervorming* 1892-49 (3 December 1892), 196-197, there 197.

<sup>167</sup> E.C. Knappert, ‘Post-propaganda’, *Ibid.* 1895-15 (13 April 1895), 58; 1895-17 (27 April 1895), 65-66.

stimulate its members to be socially active without organising *toynbeewerk* itself, arguing that *toynbeewerk* could only be the expression of genuine religious life if individuals were not *forced* to bear responsibility for it –, she did succeed in instigating the general assembly of the NPB to set up a postal mission in 1895.<sup>168</sup> The *postpropaganda*, as it was called in the NPB, was intended to help people spiritually develop themselves and was accordingly seen as a type of social work.<sup>169</sup> Contrary to *toynbeewerk*, however, it was explicitly meant to propagate a liberal Protestant outlook on life and could hence be organised by the NPB without objections.

Knappert also prompted her fellow modernists to consider following British Unitarian minister John Trevor (1855-1930) in establishing so-called ‘labour churches’.<sup>170</sup> In an 1896 article in *De Hervorming*, she explained that the founding of such churches, which intended to blend social democracy and liberal Protestantism into a socialist Christianity, was motivated by five principles. First, although many socialists did not realise this, the labour movement was in fact a religious movement. After all, it tried to liberate labourers from an economic system that hindered them from becoming spiritually developed individuals and as such furthered the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God. Second, the kind of religion finding expression in the labour movement was not the religion of a particular class, but the religion *of* humanity *for* humanity. Third, this religion was non-dogmatic, allowing everyone to develop *personal* conceptions of God, and non-sectarian, exceeding denominational boundaries. Fourth, labourers could only free themselves from wage slavery if they knew what the laws of God were and if their personalities were developed to such an extent that they were able to obey those laws. Fifth and last, individual reform should not precede structural reform in the fabric of society, as liberal Protestants maintained, nor should a turnover of the existing socio-economic order precede moral uplifting, as defended in socialism – rather, individual and social reform should be aspired after *simultaneously*.<sup>171</sup> After establishing a first labour church in Manchester in 1891, Trevor gained a following in other British cities and towns as well, resulting in the emergence of more than fifty labour churches in the mid-1890s. Soon afterwards however, the labour church movement fell into decline, ceasing to exist by the outbreak of the First World War.<sup>172</sup> This decline was not due to hostility against labour churches in politically socialist circles – on the contrary, several leading social democrats sympathised with Trevor. The labour church movement collapsed rather due to a lack of support in liberal Protestant circles. Leading Unitarians as P.H. Wicksteed (1844-1927) and R. Travers Herford (1860-1950) were shown to be sceptical about Trevor’s initiative. The former had initially supported Trevor, but came to conclude that the labour churches fell short of expectations.<sup>173</sup> The latter had never seen any good in separate labour churches in the first place, blaming Trevor for reducing the Gospel to a socialist pamphlet.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>168</sup> [E.C. Knappert in:] *Handelingen NPB 1895*, 10-11; [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – Ons zilveren feest’, *De Hervorming* 1895-45 (9 November 1895), 178-179, there 178.

<sup>169</sup> E.g.: J.F. Knipscheer, ‘Onze postpropaganda’, *Ibid.* 1906-06 (10 February 1906), 41-42.

<sup>170</sup> E.C. Knappert, ‘De Engelsche Arbeidskerk’, *Ibid.* 1896-37 (12 September 1896), 145-146; 1896-38 (19 September 1896), 149-150; 1896-39 (26 September 1896), 154; 1896-40 (3 October 1896), 157-158.

<sup>171</sup> E.C. Knappert, ‘De Engelsche Arbeidskerk’, *Ibid.* 1896-38 (19 September 1896), 149-150, there 149. Dealing with the labour church movement, Lindeboom mentions only the first four principles. See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 168.

<sup>172</sup> M. Bevir, ‘The Labour Church Movement’, *Journal of British Studies* XXXVIII.2 (1999), 217-245.

<sup>173</sup> ‘Buitenland – Uit de arbeiderskerken’, *De Hervorming* 1899-28 (15 July 1899), 118-119.

<sup>174</sup> ‘Buitenland – Engelsche correspondentie’, *Ibid.* 1893-51 (23 December 1893), 203; 1893-52 (30 December 1893), 207. See also: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 169-170.

In the Netherlands, labour churches failed to emerge, for in the 1890s the antagonism between the labour movement and religious movements such as the modernist one was considerably bigger than in Britain – more than that, nineteenth-century socialism in Britain as such was much less permeated with an anti-religious and anti-church spirit than in continental Europe.<sup>175</sup> Even Dutch modernists who were favourably disposed towards Trevor's labour church movement ultimately did not follow in his footsteps. After resigning as the pastor of the NPB branch in Schiedam and joining the SDAP in 1899, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Jr., for example, was thinking of establishing a labour church, preferably under the banner of the SDAP.<sup>176</sup> Troelstra, however, blew the whistle on him, arguing that Hugenholtz, or any SDAP member for that matter, was subject to party discipline and not allowed to set up an initiative in the name of social democracy without party consent.<sup>177</sup> As it was absolutely clear that there was no party support for a labour church, Hugenholtz abandoned his intention.<sup>178</sup> A. van der Heide, to name another socialist modernist, wrote sympathetically on the institution of the labour church as late as 1914. Yet, in accordance with his ideal of the Dutch Reformed Church as *volkskerk*, he believed that the Dutch Reformed Church was liberal Protestants' gateway to the masses and felt that it was better to strengthen the socialist element within this denomination than to found separate labour churches.<sup>179</sup> Already at the 1896 general NPB assembly, Knappert herself hesitated to 'import' the labour church movement from Britain to the Netherlands. The NPB was in her eyes the obvious candidate to do so, but, notwithstanding her strong sympathies for Trevor, she explained that the NPB would not and should not take the lead in establishing labour churches. At the time, Knappert noticed, "many" NPB members were "socialists of the heart" – socialists in a vague cultural sense, who acknowledged that present-day society was not as humane as it should be –, but only "very few" of them were social democrats – that is, socialists in a political sense. She therefore believed that there was not enough support for an initiative furthering the cause of social democracy, such as the labour church, in NPB circles. Moreover, it was not up to the NPB to take such an initiative, Knappert lectured: labour churches should not be affiliated to one particular ecclesial denomination or religious association and should only be established if labourers themselves felt the need to do so.<sup>180</sup> In SDAP circles, this last argument was brought forward against the founding of labour churches as such. In response to the only serious attempt to actually institute a labour church, in Utrecht in 1899, prominent socialist Richard Roland Holst (1868-1938) sneered that the whole endeavour was a bourgeois affair, lacking working-class support and not answering to working-class needs.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>175</sup> P. Catterall, 'The Distinctiveness of British Socialism? Religion and the Rise of Labour, c. 1900-39', in: M. Worley (ed.), *The Foundations of the British Labour Party. Identities, Cultures and Perspectives, 1900-39* (Farnham and Burlington 2009), 131-152, there 134-137; Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 170.

<sup>176</sup> Bank and Van Buuren write that Hugenholtz tried to establish a labour church in 1898, yet other sources state that he only came to pursue the founding of a labour church *after* his resignation, in 1899. See: Bank and Van Buuren, 1900, 350; [F. Netscher], 'Karakterschets – Ds. F.W.N. Hugenholtz Jr.', *Hollandsche Revue* IV.3 (1899), 179-192, there 191; Noordegraaf, 'F.W.N. Hugenholtz als voorganger van de Protestantenvond in Schiedam', 42.

<sup>177</sup> [Netscher], 'Karakterschets – Ds. F.W.N. Hugenholtz Jr.', 192.

<sup>178</sup> 'Binnenlandsch overzicht – "Labour-church" (arbeiderskerk) te Utrecht', *Sociaal Weekblad* XIII.9 (4 March 1899), 104-105, there 105. See also: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Geen arbeiderskerk', *De Hervorming* 1899-10 (11 March 1899), 38.

<sup>179</sup> [A. van der Heide in: H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – "Odéon"', *Ibid.* 1914-29 (18 July 1914), 247-248, there 248.

<sup>180</sup> "Want wel mogen vele zijner leden tot de zogenaamde gevoels-socialisten behooren, sociaal-democraten zijn onder ons slechts weinigen." Quoted from: [E.C. Knappert in:] *Handelingen NPB 1896*, 51-53. The quote is on p. 53.

<sup>181</sup> [R. Roland Holst in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Te Utrecht', *De Hervorming* 1899-08 (25 February 1899), 30.

While British Unitarianism thus influenced discussions in the Dutch modernist movement on social reform, the influence of American Unitarianism on Dutch modernism was more diverse. Channing was held in high regard in modernist circles, though more so in the *Groningen* movement.<sup>182</sup> Modernists admired him for paving the way for the two theologians who, after himself, have undoubtedly exerted the most profound influence on the development of American Unitarianism in the nineteenth century: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Theodore Parker (1810-1860).<sup>183</sup> Translating several of Emerson's and Parker's works into Dutch and devoting several biographical studies to them, Dutch modernist theologians showed a keen interest in their outlook on and attitude to life.<sup>184</sup> Emerson was the key figure in a movement known as 'Transcendentalism', which, emerging in Unitarian circles in the 1830s, built upon Channing's idea that there is a divine spark inside every human being, while leaving the latter's rationalist, Christocentric supernaturalism behind.<sup>185</sup> In line with the general trend in contemporary American and European intellectual life to no longer one-sidedly focus on human reason as the basis of knowledge, called 'Romanticism', Transcendentalists felt that a rationalist approach to reality neglected man's inner life. They argued that human nature is essentially good, as the human and the divine are essentially one. Contrary to what their name might suggest, Transcendentalists thus believed in the immanence of God, defining spiritual development not as a process through which individuals come to resemble God, but as a process through which individuals become truly one with God. Their name was actually given to them by their opponents, who disregarded their philosophy of life for 'transcending' reason. As God was in all, and as they stressed that modern society affected man's true self, Transcendentalists tended to equate 'becoming one with God' with 'becoming one with unspoiled nature'. Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) most straightforwardly exemplifies this in his 1854 novel *Walden*.<sup>186</sup> Theodore Parker was also involved in Transcendentalism. Intensively reflecting upon the questions German biblical criticism raised, he concluded in 1841 that the great truths of Christianity did not depend on the person of Jesus – rather, it is the voice of conscience resonating in man's inner self that confirms the veracity of what Jesus preached. His views were so controversial that his fellow Unitarian ministers did longer accepted him in their midst.<sup>187</sup>

While Dutch modernists chiefly appreciated Emerson for the 'free piety' expressed in his works and less for his pantheistic theology, they admired Parker for both his devoutness and

<sup>182</sup> In the 1850s, *Groningen* minister J.J. Swiers (1801-1884) translated several of Channing's works into Dutch. As said, Channing's view on Jesus closely resembled that of the *Groningers*.

<sup>183</sup> E.g.: Rauwenhoff, *Geschiedenis van het protestantisme* III, 422-427.

<sup>184</sup> These biographies include: A. Réville, *Het leven en de werken van Theodore Parker. Een hoofdstuk uit de geschiedenis van de afschaffing der slavernij in de Vereenigde Staten* (Arnhem 1866); J.H. Maronier, *Theodoor Parker* (Haarlem 1875); M.A.N. Rovers, *Ralph Waldo Emerson* ([Haarlem 1880]); E.C. Knappert, 'Ralph Waldo Emerson en zijn invloed', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* XVIII (1895), 59-90. In the early 1860s, *Groningen* minister J.J. Swiers also translated some of Parker's works into Dutch. However, due to Parker's anti-supernaturalism, his fellow *Groningers* appreciated these translations far less than Swiers's translations of Channing's works. See: J. Vree, 'Swiers, Jacob Jacobs', in: J. van den Berg et al. (eds.), *BLGNP* IV (Kampen 1998), 410-412, there 411.

<sup>185</sup> Most explicitly in his 1828 sermon *Likeness to God*, which boosted the Transcendentalist movement. See: W.E. Channing, "'Likeness to God'" (1828), in: J. Myerson (ed.), *Transcendentalism. A Reader* (Oxford etc. 2000), 3-20.

<sup>186</sup> A brief description of the characteristics of Transcendentalism is given in: 'Introduction', in: J. Myerson, S.H. Petruionis and L.D. Walls (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Transcendentalism* (Oxford etc. 2010), XXIII-XXXIII. See also: D. Grodzins, 'Unitarianism', in: *Ibid.*, 50-69; A.J. von Frank, 'Religion', in: *Ibid.*, 117-135.

<sup>187</sup> Th. Parker, "'A Discourse of the Transient and Permanent in Christianity'" (1841), in: Myerson (ed.), *Transcendentalism*, 340-365; Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* I, 85-90.

his theological views. Lindeboom even goes as far as to say that “no other foreigner has left such a mark on Dutch liberal Protestantism as Parker. [...] In the Netherlands, the writings of no other foreign liberal Protestant have been so widely published and read as those of Parker.”<sup>188</sup> No other Dutch modernists, Lindeboom continues, have identified with Parker as much as the Hugenholtz brothers.<sup>189</sup> Indeed, particularly P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. was shown to be of the same mind as Parker – a later observer even noticed with astonishment that he, “more than twenty years after the death of the American clergyman, quotes Parker as many as sixteen times in a ‘devotional anthology for our time’!”<sup>190</sup> In an 1888 article in *De Hervorming*, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. did not hesitate to put Parker on a par with Jesus, arguing that the spiritual brilliance of both men had come to shine even brighter after their physical presence on earth had ended.<sup>191</sup> As he implied that same year, he tried to model himself, as pastor of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, on Parker, whom he praised for uniting theological profundity with practical wisdom.<sup>192</sup> In fact, as Lindeboom concludes, the founding of the Free Congregation as such “can hardly be conceived of without Parker Memorial Hall in Boston in view.”<sup>193</sup> Parker Memorial Hall was built in 1873 as the chapel of the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society, founded in November 1845 to provide Parker with a pulpit after Unitarian congregations in Boston had denied him access to their pulpits.<sup>194</sup> The Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society, to quote theologian D.P. McKanan, “emerged as the era’s preeminent radical congregation,” with ‘radical’ referring to a strong commitment to progressive causes, such as abolitionism, feminism, socialism and pacifism.<sup>195</sup> Though it would be wrong to depict the Free Congregation as a hotbed of radical activism, it did resemble the Twenty-Eighth Congregational Society in the sense that it provided a platform to those who defended these causes: it was the first congregation in the Netherlands to welcome a woman onto its pulpit and regularly organised debates on subjects such as socialism and refusal of military service.<sup>196</sup> In the modernist movement as a whole,

<sup>188</sup> “...geen buitenlander zoozeer zijn stempel op het Nederlandsche Vrijzinnig Protestantisme heeft gedrukt als Parker. [...] De geschriften van Parker zijn hier te lande meer gedrukt en gelezen dan die van eenig ander buitenlandschen moderne.” Quoted from: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 181.

<sup>189</sup> Yet, it was Emerson and not Parker who was commemorated with a stained-glass window in the Free Congregation. Regarding his pantheistic theological views, P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. must have seen Emerson as a source of inspiration, though he quotes Emerson considerably less in his publications than Parker.

<sup>190</sup> Quoted from: F.C. de Vries, ‘The Influence of Parker on European Thought’, *The Proceedings of the Unitarian Historical Society* XIII.1 (1960), 84-86, there 85. De Vries refers to: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Levenslicht. Stichtelijke bloemlezing voor onzen tijd* (Amsterdam 1882).

<sup>191</sup> P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., “‘Een hart van liefde vol’”, *De Hervorming* 1888-13 (31 March 1888), 49. By so doing, Hugenholtz went further than Parker himself, who, as Hugenholtz admitted, considered Jesus to be peerless. Referred to in: Poorthuis, ‘Boeddha als toetssteen voor de religieuze identiteit’, 8.

<sup>192</sup> Hugenholtz Jr., *Licht en schaduw*, 76-77.

<sup>193</sup> “...de Amsterdamsche Vrije Gemeente kan men zich bezwaarlijk ontstaan denken buiten de Boston’sche Parker Memorial Hall.” Quoted from: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* II, 181. Next to Parker Memorial Hall, the so-called ‘freireligiöse Gemeinden’ (‘free religious congregations’) in Germany also inspired the Hugenholtz brothers to found the Free Congregation. See: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., ‘De vrije gemeenten in Duitschland’, *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente* I (1878), 191-211; P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr., *Vrije Gemeenten* (Baarn 1908), 3-21.

<sup>194</sup> W.M. Whitehill, *Boston. A Topographical History* (Cambridge 1959), 132; D. Grodzins, ‘Theodore Parker and the 28<sup>th</sup> Congregational Society. The Reform Church and the Spirituality of Reformers in Boston, 1845-1859’, in: Ch. Capper and C.E. Wright (eds.), *Transient and Permanent. The Transcendentalist Movement and Its Contexts* (Boston 1999), 73-117.

<sup>195</sup> D.P. McKanan, *Prophetic Encounters. Religion and the American Radical Tradition* (Boston 2011), 2, 64.

<sup>196</sup> Historiography sees J.F.D. Mossel (1859-1935) as the first woman who led a public religious service in the Netherlands, on 7 February 1897. See: M.P.A. de Baar, ‘Jacoba Frederika Daniëlla Mossel (1859-1935). De eerste gediplomeerde godsdienstonderwijzeres’, in: De Baar et al. (eds.), *Honderd jaar vrouwen op de kansel, 1911-2011*, 71-82,

Hugenholtz was one of the most ardent advocates of joint social activities. Moreover, during his time as its pastor, the Free Congregation stood, theologically speaking, at the extreme left of the modernist spectrum: having a pantheistic outlook on life, Hugenholtz quoted contemporary literature and non-Christian scriptures just as often as the Bible in his sermons.<sup>197</sup>

Just as their British co-religionists, American Unitarians distinguished themselves for their devotion to shaping a ‘practical Christianity’. As historian C.H. Hopkins indicates, their liberal theology with its optimistic ethics of moral perfectibility was the “seedbed” of a social reform movement that emerged as of the late 1860s and thrived from the 1890s onwards, the so-called ‘Social Gospel’.<sup>198</sup> While some scholars tend to stretch the term ‘Social Gospel’ to such an extent that it includes basically every Christian champion of social reform,<sup>199</sup> Hutchison reserves the term for those Christians who held the view “that social salvation precedes individual salvation both temporally and in importance. [...] It was this theoretical elevation of social salvation [...] that made the Social Gospel a distinctive movement.”<sup>200</sup> Yet, this definition is challengeable, as even some of the most prominent figures identifying with the Social Gospel did not endorse this viewpoint.<sup>201</sup> Instead of taking the view that structural changes in the fabric of modern society should necessarily precede moral self-improvement at the individual level as its defining characteristic, which wrongly suggests that all of its champions leaned towards political socialism, the Social Gospel can best be typified more generally by its advocates’ perception

to be acting on a divine mandate as they marshaled public opinion, the tools of social science, and the power of the democratic political process in efforts to reconstruct society and its institutions, from the local to the global level, according to Christian ethical principles. This feature distinguished the social gospel from other expressions of social Christianity, which advocated and performed benevolent social ministries, but for the primary or exclusive purpose of salvation of individual souls. In fact, theological conservatives would disparage the social gospel for its entanglement with secular social science and politics and efforts to reconstruct what they viewed as a hopelessly profane world.<sup>202</sup>

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there 76. Yet, as theologian E.H. Cossee discovered, already on 12 July 1896, E.C. Knappert led a ‘*godsdiens-oefening*’ (‘religious service’) in the NPB branch of Oud-Beijerland. See: *Afdeeling Oud-Beijerland van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond*, 11. In the first years after its founding, the Free Congregation invited socialists to give lectures, but it stopped doing so due to the latter’s anti-religious rhetoric. As of the late 1890s, it gave socialist modernists the opportunity to lecture on their convictions. See, e.g.: ‘Binnenland – Christelijk socialisme’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* LX.18040 (1 March 1887), morning paper, 1; ‘Stadsnieuws – Godsdiens en socialisme’, *De Telegraaf* VI.2153 (22 November 1898), morning paper, 2. For a lecture on pacifism, see, e.g.: ‘Binnenland – Mislukte debataavond’, *Het Vaderland* (29 October 1926), evening paper A, 2.

<sup>197</sup> Poorthuis, ‘Boeddha als toetssteen voor de religieuze identiteit’, 9-11, 14, 24-27.

<sup>198</sup> Quoted from: C.H. Hopkins, *The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism 1865-1915* (New Haven and London 1940), 4.

<sup>199</sup> P.T. Philips, *A Kingdom on Earth. Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880-1940* (University Park 1996), XIX.

<sup>200</sup> W.R. Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism* (Durham and London [1976] 1992), 165, note 36.

<sup>201</sup> J. Forsythe Fishburn, *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family. The Social Gospel in America* (Philadelphia 1981), 182, note 1; J. Forsythe Fishburn, ‘The Social Gospel as Missionary Ideology’, in: W.R. Shenk (ed.), *North American Foreign Missions, 1810-1914. Theology, Theory, and Policy* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge 2004), 218-242, there 220-221.

<sup>202</sup> Quoted from: W.J. Deichmann Edwards and C. De Swarte Gifford, ‘Introduction. Restoring Women and Reclaiming Gender in Social Gospel Studies’, in: W.J. Deichmann Edwards and C. De Swarte Gifford (eds.), *Gender and the Social Gospel* (Urbana and Chicago 2003), 1-17, there 3.

By setting theological conservatives in opposition to the Social Gospel, this last sentence suggests that the latter was closely linked to theological liberalism. Indeed, although not every liberal Protestant sympathised with the Social Gospel, and although orthodox Protestants were not completely absent in the Social Gospel movement, liberal Protestantism and the Social Gospel “for the most part [...] blended together as a unity.”<sup>203</sup> This is not surprising, because, as said above, Unitarianism fostered a climate in which the Social Gospel could germinate. Yet, with the exception of Francis Greenwood Peabody (1847-1936), whose 1900 publication *Jesus Christ and the Social Question* advanced the view that individuals and not social structures are to blame for social injustice,<sup>204</sup> Unitarians did not play first fiddle in the Social Gospel when the movement reached its apogee in the early twentieth century. In fact, as Unitarianism gradually became less explicitly Christian and as liberal theological views gradually started to take root in other denominations, Unitarians lost their leading position in American liberal Protestantism in general. Theologically influenced by Ritschl and Harnack, the Social Gospel rested on an image of Jesus, embodying middle-class values, as the preacher of the coming Kingdom of God in this world.<sup>205</sup> A prime illustration thereof is given in *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, published in 1917.<sup>206</sup> Its author, Baptist minister Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), felt, contrary to Peabody, that the configuration of contemporary society was sinful in itself. Though he kept aloof from party politics, seeing the materialist philosophy on which social democracy was based as incompatible with Christianity, Rauschenbusch appreciated the socialist labour movement. Others belonging to the socialist faction of the Social Gospel movement did become politically active and joined the Socialist Party of America.<sup>207</sup>

In the Dutch modernist movement, the Social Gospel did not receive much attention, not even from those with politically socialist leanings. This may seem odd at first glance, as the Social Gospel movement was largely based on liberal Protestant theology. Yet, the lack of attention that Dutch modernists paid to the Social Gospel had precisely – and paradoxically – to do with its liberal theological basis. With regard to biblical scholarship, American liberal theology had little to offer to Dutch modernists – in this respect, the appreciation they showed for Parker’s theological views was really an exception. American liberal theology did not bring forth original views; it largely depended on German scholarship, and came to absorb new trends within German liberal theology relatively late compared to Dutch modernism.<sup>208</sup> Moreover, other than in Europe,

<sup>203</sup> Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* II, 5.

<sup>204</sup> Cf.: “...the social teaching of Jesus is this, – that the social order is not a product of mechanism but of personality, and that personality fulfils itself only in the social order.” Quoted from: F.G. Peabody, *Jesus Christ and the Social Question. An Examination of the Teaching of Jesus in its Relation to Some of the Problems of Modern Social Life* (New York 1900), 102.

<sup>205</sup> Greenwood and Harris describe the Social Gospel as such as “a middle-class ideal.” Quoted from: Greenwood and Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*, 224. Dorrien concludes that “most of [the Social Gospel movement] preached a gospel of cultural optimism and a Jesus of middle-class idealism.” Quoted from: G.J. Dorrien, *Economy, Difference, Empire. Social Ethics for Social Justice* (New York 2010), 4. On the middle-class character of the Social Gospel, see also: Forsythe Fishburn, *The Fatherhood of God*, 12-20.

<sup>206</sup> W. Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York 1917).

<sup>207</sup> R.T. Handy, ‘Christianity and Socialism in America, 1900-1920’, *Church History* XXI.1 (1952), 39-45; C.C. Evans, *The Kingdom is Always But Coming. A Life of Walter Rauschenbusch* (Grand Rapids 2004), 243; McKanan, *Prophetic Encounters*, 134-150.

<sup>208</sup> L.J. Averill, *American Theology in the Liberal Tradition* (Philadelphia 1967), 30; Hutchison, *The Modernist Impulse in American Protestantism*, 22, 80, 122-123; Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* I, 404; A.G. Aubert, *The German Roots of Nineteenth-Century American Theology* (Oxford etc. 2013), 5.

ministers rather than university professors were the first to propagate liberal theological views in America. As a result, liberal theology was, to quote Dorrien, “considerably less scholarly and systematic” in America than in Europe – it only took root at theological faculties as late as the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>209</sup> At that time, Dorrien argues, “on a host of specific issues, American theological liberalism was still in a formative phase.” Schleiermacher’s approach to religion, which Dutch modernists had discarded long ago, was still the frame of reference in American liberal theology.<sup>210</sup> From a Dutch modernist perspective, American liberal theology therefore ‘lagged behind’ and seemed rather ‘superficial’. This unfavourable impression that American liberal theology made upon Dutch modernists was even reinforced due to the circumstance that Unitarianism, the current that Dutch modernists basically identified with American liberal Protestantism as a whole, “produced no important theologians in the twentieth century.”<sup>211</sup>

In 1935, Lindeboom accordingly passed a devastating judgement on the kind of liberal theology on which the Social Gospel for the most part relied: in American liberal Protestantism, he stated, there was “much backwardness in the field of theology; in America, the ideas put forward by radical criticism or even by Schweitzer were hardly known, and Harnack virtually remained the ultimate point of reference in American liberal theology; a ‘scientific’, that is liberal, nineteenth-century image of Jesus is usually regarded as normative.”<sup>212</sup> The radical criticism to which Lindeboom referred and of which the theologians united in the ‘Dutch Radical School’, such as A.D. Loman and W.C. van Manen, had been the prime champions, denied that the apostle Paul was the author of the New Testament epistles attributed to him.<sup>213</sup> A. Schweitzer, to whom Lindeboom also referred, was an Alsatian liberal Lutheran theologian who severely criticised the nineteenth-century liberal Protestant endeavour to write a historically accurate biography of Jesus, the so-called ‘*Leben-Jesu-Forschung*’ – the images of Jesus this endeavour had produced were nothing more than *projections* of liberal Protestants’ own beliefs and ideals onto the Gospel protagonist.<sup>214</sup> Such images, Lindeboom implied, had already largely served their turn in Dutch modernism – a process that the growing influence of right-wing modernism had intensified. Lindeboom echoed theologian W.A. Visser ’t Hooft (1900-1985), a Remonstrant who had joined the Dutch Reformed Church in his twenties and had become an advocate of Karl Barth’s neo-orthodoxy. Studying the movement in his 1928 dissertation, Visser ’t Hooft concluded that the Social Gospel clung to a theology that liberal Protestants elsewhere had left behind.<sup>215</sup> Dutch modernists felt little to no enthusiasm for the

<sup>209</sup> Quoted from: Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* I, XXII.

<sup>210</sup> Quoted from: Dorrien, *Ibid.*, 407.

<sup>211</sup> Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology* II, 4.

<sup>212</sup> “Dit verklaart veel achterlijkheid op theologisch gebied; tot een gedachtenwereld als van de radicale nieuw-testamentische kritiek of zelfs maar van Schweitzer is men in Amerika nog ternauwernood gekomen, en Harnack bleef vrijwel het verste punt waartoe de ontwikkeling voortschreed; een ‘wetenschappelijk’, d.i. liberaal 19<sup>de</sup>-eeuwsch Jezus-beeld wordt meestal als normatief gewaardeerd.” Quoted from: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 194-195.

<sup>213</sup> See: H. Detering, ‘The Dutch Radical Approach to the Pauline Epistles’, *Journal of Higher Criticism* III.2 (1996), 163-193.

<sup>214</sup> In: Schweitzer, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*.

<sup>215</sup> Cf.: “When most liberal theology in Europe passed on to a greater radicalism through which the conception of the historical Christ was seen to raise more questions than it could answer [...], liberal American theology did not follow. On the contrary, it reinforced its emphasis upon the historical conception and based most of its further theological work upon this as the cornerstone. The reason for this divergence in development is perhaps to be found in the fact that the liberal portrait of Jesus had become so much the basis and justification of the social theology, that it



Social Gospel, as they noticed that it could apparently not do without this ‘outdated’ theology – even though Rauschenbusch’s *A Theology for the Social Gospel* offered a basis for theological renewal. This was at least what P. Eldering put forward in 1926, in the only article in *De Hervorming* dealing with the Social Gospel – in itself a clear indication of Dutch modernists’ lack of interest in the movement. Rauschenbusch’s book, he argued, contained some elements that, if further developed, were particularly appealing to right-wing modernists of a politically socialist persuasion: it offered, albeit feebly, new perspectives on ‘sin’ as the lack of willingness to build a new society, on ‘conversion’ as the rejection of individual *and* social wrongs, on Christ as the saviour of society and not only of individual souls, and on eschatology. For that reason, the late Roessingh had encouraged his students to read it.<sup>216</sup> Yet, as Remonstrant H.J. Heering (1912-2000) had to conclude in his 1937 dissertation, Rauschenbusch’s spiritual heirs continued to see sin as temporary human imperfection and stuck to individualist social ethics. This was what liberal Protestantism had been like in the nineteenth century – ‘old-school modernism’ in its classic form, to which hardly any Dutch modernist adhered anymore – and was hence, in Heering’s opinion, antiquated.<sup>217</sup>

Compared to Dutch modernists, Unitarians were more strongly engaged in foreign mission. The name ‘British and Foreign Unitarian Association’ implied that Unitarians in the United Kingdom were dedicated to defending the cause of Unitarianism outside of their own country. The same was true of Unitarians in the United States. Yet, the foreign mission to which Anglo-Saxon Unitarians gave shape differed from “ordinary types of missionary activity.”<sup>218</sup> Instead of sending missionaries to remote areas of the world to found churches, baptise ‘heathens’ and initiate the latter into Christian customs and Christian worship, British and American Unitarians looked for manifestations of religiosity in which they recognised Unitarian-like views, and tried to foster and encourage these manifestations. In India, for example, Unitarians from both the United Kingdom and the United States were involved with the Brahmo Samaj, a religious and social reform movement within Hinduism referred to in chapter 5. For them, it was no problem that the leadership of the Brahmo Samaj did not identify with Christianity and preserved the religious imagery and symbols of Hinduism. They acknowledged its founder, Rammohun Roy (1772-1833), to be “the most advanced Christian,” recognising his understanding of religion and moral sense as fruits of a ‘Christian spirit’.<sup>219</sup> As such, without breaking with Hinduism, Roy was incorporated into Christianity after all – and the Brahmo Samaj with him. One of his spiritual heirs, Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902), was equally “merged into Christianity; his identity as a Hindu subsumed into a broader liberal Protestant view of universalized religion.”<sup>220</sup> In Unitarianism, and more widely in liberal Protestantism, the hope that a free development of religious life would ultimately result in a universal religion, one religion for mankind as a whole, had long been cherished.<sup>221</sup> Liberal Protestants could only envision such a universal

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could not easily be given up without uprooting the whole structure of its thought.” Quoted from: W.A. Visser ‘t Hooft, *The Background of the Social Gospel in America* (Haarlem 1928), 156.

<sup>216</sup> P. Eldering, ‘Christen-socialisme’, *De Hervorming* 1926-32 (7 August 1926), 250-251, there 250.

<sup>217</sup> H.J. Heering, *De religieuze toekomstverwachting, in het bijzonder in de Amerikaanse theologie* (Amsterdam 1937), 94-102; H. de Jonge, *Walter Rauschenbusch en de werkelijkheid van het Godsrijk* (Gorinchem 2002), 179.

<sup>218</sup> W.G. Tarrant, *Unitarianism* (London 1912), 90.

<sup>219</sup> Quoted in: Greenwood and Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*, 96.

<sup>220</sup> Quoted from: *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 225.

religion to be based on principles similar to those of their own, as liberal Protestantism was free of doctrines and was, in their view, the most humane religion.

Next to India, American and British Unitarians were also active in Japan. As in India, they did not try to proactively spread Unitarianism, but became active in Japan only *after* the emergence of liberal tendencies within domestic religious life – in fact, the Unitarian-minded Japanese intellectual Yano Fumio (1850-1913) *invited* them to advance their cause in Japanese society in 1886.<sup>222</sup> Speaking on behalf of the AUA, Clay MacCauley (1843-1925), who stayed in Japan from 1889 until 1910, was eager to stress that

the initiative of the work was not with the American Unitarian Association. It came from the Japanese themselves [...]. It was at their suggestion that the Americans sent their representatives to Japan. They came not to impose a fixed theological creed upon your people [the Japanese, TK], but to inspire them with such principles as the duty of free inquiry, of the ultimate authority of the reason, and of the supremacy of character in religion. They came, too, to confer, to reciprocate with your own religious believers, and to further the study of comparative theology and the sympathy of religions [...]. The Unitarian movement here was started as a spiritual method that would permeate religious bodies generally, rather than reproduce or build up a sectarian denomination.<sup>223</sup>

As MacCauley's words make clear, Unitarians' foreign missionary activities resembled those of the German liberal Protestants united in the AEPMV: both Unitarians and the AEPMV limited their missionary activities to countries in which indigenous religious life already contained buds of 'liberalism' or 'elements of truth' with which they could link up and that they merely tried to bring into full blossom. They therefore did not consider their activities to be an infringement on the free development of religious life in those countries. The rationale behind their approach to foreign mission was the idea that intellectual elites exert the most influence on social and cultural life. If these elites could be helped to develop an attitude to life based on liberal religious principles, the hope or expectation was that those principles would ultimately percolate into the rest of society as well.<sup>224</sup> Intellectual elites only existed in countries that had already reached a certain level of civilisation, leading to a focus on East Asia. Contrary to common parlance, however, Unitarians depicted as 'foreign mission' not only their activities in India and Japan, but also their support to Unitarian-minded groups in such culturally Christian countries as Norway, Czechoslovakia and the Philippines, groups dealt with in more detail below.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> H. Ritter, *A History of Protestant Missions in Japan* (Tokyo 1898), 317. The Japanese government supported Fumio, for it felt that Japan needed to get closer to the Christian world in order to increase its role on the world stage. As they deemed supernatural beliefs to be incompatible with Japanese culture, Japanese intellectuals and government officials considered Unitarianism to be the form of Christianity that was most likely to influence Japanese religious life. See: Greenwood and Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*, 99.

<sup>223</sup> [C. MacCauley in:] 'Clay MacCauley Memorial Toro', *The Christian Register* LXXXIV.52 (28 December 1905), 1458-1459, there 1459.

<sup>224</sup> Cf.: J.C. Schagen van Soelen, 'Feuilleton – De Allgem. Ev. Protest. Missions-Verein en de zending', *De Hervorming* 1886-21 (22 May 1886), 81-83, there 81. Outside of a missionary context, the same line of reasoning was used to justify the policy of *De Hervorming* to specifically target 'intellectuals' as of 1918. See, e.g.: A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – "De Hervorming"', *Ibid.* 1918-14 (6 April 1918), 55; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – De nieuwe koers', *Ibid.* 1918-43 (26 October 1918), 171; A.H. van der Hoeve, 'Bondsleven – Aanpakken', *Ibid.* 1919-01 (4 January 1919), 3.

<sup>225</sup> Looking back on the history of Unitarian missionary activities in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Unitarian minister Josiah R. Bartlett (1913-1997) characterised these activities as follows: "Our foreign mission work, if one can call it that, seems to be largely a matter of maintaining correspondence with elements of theological liberalism in other lands." Quoted from: J.R. Bartlett, 'Is Unitarianism Parasitic on the Christian Tradition?', *The Christian*

That Unitarians were more strongly involved in foreign mission than Dutch modernists can now be explained. Unitarians became active only in countries in which signs of liberal religious life were visible, and only because they were asked for assistance. They were just as averse to foreign mission in a traditional sense as Dutch modernists. The discussion on foreign mission among the latter revolved around the question of whether support should be given to the *Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap*, which was primarily active in the inlands of the Dutch East Indies. In these ‘uncivilised’ areas, indigenous religious life did not (yet) contain any elements with which modernists could link up. There, missionary activities would thus indeed be an infringement on the free development of religious life. As a result, Dutch modernist enthusiasm for foreign mission was rather low.

While, as chapter 8 has argued, the Dutch modernist movement did not manage to exert a lasting attraction on the key figures of Dutch intellectual and cultural life, failed to gain a large following among the masses, and hence relied on bourgeois support, Unitarians in Britain and the United States equally struggled to get a strong foothold in the lower classes, but did play a disproportionately large and lasting role in intellectual and cultural life.<sup>226</sup> This difference needs to be examined in closer detail in order to be sufficiently explained – and this is not the right place to do so –, but it must have been at least partially caused by the circumstance that Unitarianism in Britain and the United States was more strongly involved in progressive politics than liberal Protestantism in continental Europe. With regard to social background, only a subtle difference existed: Unitarianism in Britain and America relied just as heavily on bourgeois support as liberal Protestantism elsewhere, but was particularly associated with the *upper* middle class and, especially in America, even with the upper class.<sup>227</sup> In the United States, Unitarianism initially recruited most of its adherents from New England’s educated, moneyed and politically leading elite, giving it a high-class image that it never got rid of. In fact, as Unitarian Universalist theologian Mark W. Harris argues in a 2011 publication, Unitarians fostered this image themselves:

We perceive the people who are from another class as being so different from us in values. [...] We are reticent to embrace those we perceive as working-class, uneducated, or narrow-minded. [...] Our ‘all’ is the narrow social circle of the upper-middle class, the educated few, or the like-minded liberals that we attract. [...] While our Principles affirm that we would welcome someone who is very different from us, many of our members feel we should recruit among those who match

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*Register* CXX.7 (1 April 1941), 129-132, there 131. The Unitarian involvement in Czechoslovakia, starting around 1920, is regarded as “the most numerically significant Unitarian mission.” Quoted from: Greenwood and Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*, 111.

<sup>226</sup> R.K. Webb, ‘Quakers and Unitarians’, in: D.G. Paz (ed.), *Nineteenth-Century English Religious Traditions. Retrospect and Prospect* (Westport and London 1995), 85-115, there 100; P.K. Conkin, *American Originals. Home-made Varieties of Christianity* (Chapel Hill 1997), 74; D.W. Howe, *What Hath God Wrought. The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (Oxford etc. 2007), 617.

<sup>227</sup> J.L. Adams et al., *Unitarians Face a New Age. The Report of the Commission of Appraisal to the American Unitarian Association* (Boston 1936), 315; R.E. Sykes, *Massachusetts Unitarianism and Social Change. A Religious Social System in Transition, 1780-1870* ([Minneapolis] 1966), 135; G. Parsons, ‘From Dissenters to Free Churchmen. The Transitions of Victorian Nonconformity’, in: G. Parsons (ed.), *Religion in Victorian Britain I. Traditions* (Manchester and New York 1988), 67-116, there 80; J.A. Buehrens and F. Church, *A Chosen Faith. An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism* (Boston [1989] 1998), 54; P.D. Airhart, ‘Unitarian Universalist Association’, in: H.J. Hillerbrand (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Protestantism IV* (London and New York 2004), 578-593, there 578; A. Browde, *Faith Under Siege. A History of Unitarian Theology* (New York and Bloomington 2008), 81.

the demographic characteristics of our current membership. New members should fit in or be like us for us to grow.<sup>228</sup>

While Unitarians have often been labelled as an ‘elite’, which is the label Harris uses as the title of his book, it would be wrong to depict them as *elitist*, as a group whose main concern was to secure its own position of power in society. On the contrary, throughout their history, Unitarians have been highly involved in movements aiming to empower African Americans, women and sexual minorities.<sup>229</sup> Moreover, they have been among the most ardent advocates of initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life of the lower classes. Nonetheless, as Harris notices throughout Unitarian history the inclusive character of Unitarianism, resting on the principle of individual fulfilment, has been implicitly imbued with class-consciousness, being the assumption that individual fulfilment or spiritual development, as explained with regard to Dutch modernism in chapter 6, is linked to ascension on the socio-economic ladder.

In the introductory chapter, the argument that the Dutch modernist movement would have had a stronger position in social life had it been better organised has been challenged. The subsequent chapters have argued that this was so not only because modernists, in spite of their rhetoric, shrunk back from thoroughly reforming existing church and social structures, but also because modernist discourse lacked appeal to a non-bourgeois audience. As discussed in chapters 6 and 7, modernist discourse was permeated with bourgeois ideals, bourgeois values, and bourgeois interests. Harris’s analysis of classism in Unitarian history reinforces the claim that has been made in the introduction: after all, American Unitarianism was much better organised than Dutch modernism and still failed to captivate the masses. As Harris argues, class-consciousness was a decisive element in that. His observations, and those made in this chapter with regard to the bourgeois character of liberal Protestantism in other countries, give reason to claim that class-consciousness was not only intrinsic to Dutch modernism, but that it was intrinsic to liberal Protestantism as such.<sup>230</sup>

## 10. Liberal Protestants Elsewhere

Next to the *Protestantenverein* in Germany, the associations modelled after the *Protestantenverein* in other countries, and Unitarians in Britain and the United States, there were communities of liberal Protestants elsewhere – the one better organised than the other. The *Vrye Protestantse Kerk* (Free Protestant Church) in the South African city of Cape Town, established in 1867,

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<sup>228</sup> Quoted from: M.W. Harris, *Elite. Uncovering Classism in Unitarian Universalist History* (Boston 2011), 27, 29, 112.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, 119-124. Unitarians prominently appear as advocates of minority rights in: McKanan, *Prophetic Encounters*.

<sup>230</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr lists Unitarianism among the ‘churches of the middle class’, attributing its rise to the emergence of a “middle-class psychology” in which rationalism, intellectual development, individual autonomy, a non-fatalistic attitude to life and human perfectibility were prevailing ideals. What is more, this middle-class psychology was pushed to its extreme in Unitarianism, as in Unitarianism “the related doctrines of human ability and of limited divine sovereignty were combined with the teaching of self-help and with faith in human progress.” See: H.R. Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (Hamden [1929] 1954), 77-105. The quotes are on pp. 80-81 and 103. See also: J.M. Floyd Thomas, *The Origins of Black Humanism in America. Reverend Ethelred Brown and the Unitarian Church* (New York 2008), 63-64. Referring to Unitarianism in Britain, Parsons argues: “Unitarianism was always destined to be firmly middle class. It was never remotely likely to possess widespread appeal or to have much impact on the mass of working-class ‘habitual neglecters of religion’.” Quoted from: Parsons, ‘From Dissenters to Free Churchmen’, 80. Moreover, as the section on Germany has shown, *Kulturprotestantismus* was equally middle-class.

was one of these communities. Though completely overlooked in Lindeboom's *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme*, the *Vrye Protestantse Kerk* had strong ties with Dutch modernism. Its founder D.P. Faure (1842-1916) had studied at the theological faculty in Leiden in the first half of the 1860s. Back in South Africa, he asked one of his Leiden professors, L.W.E. Rauwenhoff, advice on how to develop congregational life.<sup>231</sup> Rauwenhoff, whose objections against the institution of the church have been discussed in chapter 4, made it clear that he saw the *Vrye Protestantse Kerk* as a realisation of his ideal of the faith community of the future, praising it as "the first example of a free congregation based on modernist principles" in his 1871 *Geschiedenis van het protestantisme (History of Protestantism)*, and honouring its founder as "the man who had entered into combat with confessionalism the right way" at the 1877 general NPB meeting.<sup>232</sup> Those words must have given Ph.R. Hugenholtz and P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. the final push to establish the Free Congregation in Amsterdam, as the following sequence of events is too coincidental to not be related. The 1877 NPB meeting, which the Hugenholtz brothers both attended, was held on 30 October.<sup>233</sup> Moreover, on 10 November, F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., who sympathised with his half-brothers, wrote an editorial in *De Hervorming* in which he held the *Vrye Protestantse Kerk* up as an example to those toying with the idea of creating free congregations in the Netherlands.<sup>234</sup> The Hugenholtz brothers finally left the Dutch Reformed Church on 30 November.<sup>235</sup> They later showed recognition of Faure as a kindred spirit, inviting him to give a sermon in the Free Congregation in 1884.<sup>236</sup> In the course of the twentieth century, the *Vrye Protestantse Kerk* began to explicitly identify as a Unitarian congregation and to seek alliance with American Unitarians.<sup>237</sup>

Faure, seeing J.H. Scholten as the biggest influence on the development of his theological views, initially "considered the newest theological views to be acceptable to all, and thought that mankind would be better off if it could be converted to [liberal Protestantism]." Later in life, however, he changed his mind, feeling that liberal Protestants should refrain from making converts among orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics. Because the latter were "spiritually still children" and hence incapable of comprehending the true meaning of liberal Protestant views, introducing these views to them would lead to their "moral ruin." Orthodox Protestants' and Roman Catholics' moral life, Faure now reasoned, was solely based on the ethical prescriptions of their churches – prescriptions they accepted because they took their churches to be institutions of salvation. If this last belief, which was exactly what liberal Protestants challenged, were to disappear all of a sudden, then orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics had to rely on their own moral sense, which they did not have and could not develop

<sup>231</sup> F. Hale, 'The Origins of the Free Protestant Church in South Africa. David P. Faure contra Dutch Reformed Calvinism', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXXIII.1 (2007), 327-350.

<sup>232</sup> "Het eerste voorbeeld van een vrije gemeentestichting op moderne grondbeginselen." Quoted from: Rauwenhoff, *Geschiedenis van het protestantisme* III, 429; "...den man, die op de rechte wijze den strijd tegen het confessionalisme had gevoerd." Quoted from: [L.W.E. Rauwenhoff in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De vrije protestantsche kerk in de Kaapstad', *De Hervorming* 1877-45 (10 November 1877), 1.

<sup>233</sup> As becomes evident from: *Handelingen NPB 1877*, 35.

<sup>234</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De vrije protestantsche kerk in de Kaapstad', *De Hervorming* 1877-45 (10 November 1877), 1.

<sup>235</sup> Cossee, 'De stichting van de Vrije Gemeente', 109.

<sup>236</sup> D.P. Faure, *My Life and Times* (Cape Town 1907), 114.

<sup>237</sup> M.W. Harris, *The A to Z of Unitarian Universalism* (Lanham etc. 2009), 439-440; A. Nash, *The Dialectical Tradition in South Africa* (New York and London 2009), 219, note 32.

as they lacked the spiritual capacities to do so.<sup>238</sup> In the early twentieth century, Faure even became disappointed in modern theology as such – particularly in the inability of modern theology to prove, as it contended, that the human soul was indeed immortal. No longer believing that the force of reason was powerful enough to belie orthodox and materialist outlooks on life, he therefore began to advocate that liberal Protestantism should be supplemented with Spiritism.<sup>239</sup>

In Belgium, Protestantism was numerically just as marginal as in neighbouring France, being stronger in Brussels and French-speaking Wallonia than in Dutch-speaking Flanders. In the nineteenth century, nearly all Protestant congregations in Belgium belonged either to the *Bond der Protestantsch-Evangelische Kerken van het Koninkrijk België* (League of Protestant Evangelical Churches in the Kingdom of Belgium), comprising those Reformed and Lutheran congregations that had existed on Belgian soil before 1839, or to the *Belgische Christelijke Zendingkerk* (Belgian Christian Missionary Church), which had been founded in 1849 on Calvinist principles with the intention of evangelising among the Belgian people.<sup>240</sup> The latter was homogeneously orthodox, having relations with one of the denominations that would merge into the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in 1892, but in the former, more room was left for liberal theological views.<sup>241</sup> One sign thereof was that Th.E. Bost (1828-1910), the then minister of the congregation in the Walloon town of Verviers, could publish his *Le protestantisme libéral* in 1865 without being subjected to disciplinary measures by the synod of the League of Churches.<sup>242</sup> The modern theological ideas Bost put forward in this publication met with some response in the circle of leading liberal politicians and intellectuals. The most prominent of these individuals was historian of religion and statesman E.F.A. Goblet d'Alviella (1846-1925), who contributed to the founding of the *Église protestante libérale* (Liberal Protestant Church) in Brussels in 1881.<sup>243</sup> Its minister J. Hocart (1843-1923) addressed his sermons to a small audience mostly consisting of, to quote historian H.R. Boudin, “university professors, lawyers and high-ranking government officials – in short, an elite of which Goblet d'Alviella was the pivot. It resembled the proverbial army of a South American country: many generals and few soldiers.”<sup>244</sup> In other words, the *Église protestante libérale* lacked lower-class members, although

<sup>238</sup> “...dat ik de nieuwe theologische inzichten voor allen geschikt achtte en waande dat de heele menschheid er beter aan toe zou zijn, indien zij tot onze denkbeelden kon bekeerd worden.”; “...zij die geestelijk nog kinderen zijn...”; “...zedelijken ondergang...” Quoted from: [D.P. Faure in: J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Een geestverwant in Zuid-Afrika’, *De Hervorming* 1892-39 (24 September 1892), 153-154; Faure, *My Life and Times*, 27.

<sup>239</sup> B.A. Zuiddam, ‘Reason’s Dead End in David Faure. Why the Cape’s Earliest Liberal Minister Embraced Spiritism’, *In die Skriflig* XLIII.2 (2009), 271-289, there 277-279, 283-284.

<sup>240</sup> A good overview of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century history of Belgian Protestantism is given in: H.R. Boudin and M. Blok, *Synodaal gedenkboek van de Verenigde Protestantse Kerk in België / Mémorial synodal de l’Église Protestante Unie de Belgique* (Brussel 1992).

<sup>241</sup> Notwithstanding this relationship, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands would found churches of their own in the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium, the first of which was established in Brussels in 1894. See: A. de Raaf, *Een open poort naar het zuiden. Geschiedenis van het deputaatschap voor de ‘Zaken van de Belgische Kerken’ (v/h voor de ‘Evangelisatie in België’) van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (1927-1992)* (Delft 1997); T.E.M. Krijger, ‘Een Hollandse stad op de Vlaamse berg. De gereformeerde kerken als protestantse geloofsgemeenschap in rooms-katholiek Vlaanderen (1894-1978)’, *Historisch Tijdschrift GKN* XXIV (June 2012), 3-27.

<sup>242</sup> Th.E. Bost, *Le protestantisme libéral* (Paris 1865); H.R. Boudin, ‘Eugène Goblet d’Alviella et le protestantisme libéral’, in: A. Dierkens (ed.), *Eugène Goblet d’Alviella. Historien et franc-maçon* (Brussels 1995), 35-49, there 37.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, 43; G.L.J. Liagre, ‘Les débuts de l’Église libérale de Bruxelles (1877-1888)’, *Bulletin de la Société Royale d’Histoire du Protestantisme Belge* CXXXV (2006), 1-38.

<sup>244</sup> “Le mouvement protestanto-libéral fortement élitiste comprenait des professeurs d’université, des avocats, des grands commis de l’État, bref, un groupe de pointe dont Goblet d’Alviella était le fer de lance. [...] c’était un peu

Hocart and Goblet d'Alviella did have the intention to spread liberal Protestant ideas and ideals outside of their small elite circle through social work. In 1912, they were involved with the creation of the *Comité belge d'initiative du Christianisme progressif et libéral* (Belgian Action Committee for the Advancement of Progressive and Liberal Christianity). According to a brief item in *De Hervorming*, this committee aimed at making liberal Protestantism better known to the Belgian public at large by conducting similar activities as the NPB.<sup>245</sup> Yet, due to the outbreak of the First World War, it never really got off the ground and quickly died a silent death.<sup>246</sup> Next to the *Église protestante libérale* in Brussels, which came to be known as the 'Foyer de l'âme' ('Home of the Soul'), a second liberal Protestant congregation, also called 'Foyer de l'âme' to accentuate its ties with the one in the Belgian capital, came into being in Charleroi in 1936. Within the League of Churches, the congregations in Verviers, Liège and Ghent were known to have a liberal orientation in around 1900.<sup>247</sup>

Although lacking an organisation of their own, the small liberal Protestant community in Belgium tried to maintain relations with the NPB and its sister associations, delegating ministers to the international conferences of religious liberals in the early twentieth century. At the third of these conferences, held in Geneva in 1905, one of them made a speech evincing that the desire to formulate a confession of faith was at the time not only felt among some Dutch modernists. Arnold Rey (1867-1940), a minister in Liège who was originally from Switzerland, lectured that it was "a necessity" to lay down what modernists believed in. Holding up orthodoxy as an example in this respect, Rey argued that having a communal declaration of faith, explicitly *not* written as an intellectual critique of supernaturalist Christianity, would help liberal Protestants to become more determined and to make more propaganda for their convictions.<sup>248</sup> Its effectuation was shelved and eventually abandoned, but Rey's plea was an important sign of the times. It showed that modernists outside of the Netherlands had just as much difficulty to describe their faith as other than as a negation of orthodoxy on rational grounds and that the discontentment therewith increased among them as well.<sup>249</sup> This dissatisfaction, in turn, was rooted in a larger trend in Western culture at the beginning of the twentieth century towards criticising nineteenth-century intellectualism,<sup>250</sup> of which old-school modernism was an exponent. Moreover, as becomes clear in Rey's plea, non-Dutch liberal Protestants felt marginalised too. Orthodoxy flourished and exerted considerably more influence than modernism, Rey noticed –

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*comme la proverbiale armée sud-américaine: de nombreux généraux et de rarissimes soldats.*" Quoted from: Boudin, 'Eugène Goblet d'Alviella et le protestantisme libéral', 46.

<sup>245</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen in België', *De Hervorming* 1913-47 (22 November 1913), 376.

<sup>246</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 153-154.

<sup>247</sup> E.G. Léonard, *Histoire générale du protestantisme* III. *Déclin et renouveau (XVIII<sup>e</sup>-XX<sup>e</sup> siècle)* (Paris 1964), 305; J. Temmerman, *Van Réveil tot liberaal protestantisme. Geschiedenis van de protestantse Brabantdamkerk te Gent tijdens de 19<sup>de</sup> eeuw* (Brussel 1996), 107-170; G.L.J. Liagre, *Edmond Wiétrich en de geschiedenis van de vrijzinnig-protestantse "Foyer de l'Ame" in Charleroi* (Brussel 1998), 15.

<sup>248</sup> A. Rey, 'De l'opportunité de formuler une déclaration de foi du Christianisme libéral', in: Montet (ed.), *Actes du III<sup>me</sup> Congrès International du Christianisme Libéral et Progressif*, 204-213.

<sup>249</sup> In the circle of the Swedish *Protestantföreningen*, a declaration of faith had already been formulated in 1885. In response, the editors of *De Protestant* had stated that they could more or less agree with the content of this declaration, but that they strongly rejected the formulation of a creed-like declaration as such: it would pin individuals down to formulations that they had not chosen for themselves. See: 'Mededeelingen en berichten – Uit Zweden', *De Protestant* III.8 (21 February 1885), 4.

<sup>250</sup> Baneke, *Synthetisch denken*, 119-142.

and managed to do so, as Dutch modernist Knappert had also implied in 1903, because it had a confession of faith from which it derived clear objectives to realise in society and with which it could easily approach the masses.<sup>251</sup>

In Italy, there were two tiny centres of liberal Protestant activity. One was centred around F. Bracciforti (1827-1907), a professor of English who founded a small Unitarian community in Milan in 1870.<sup>252</sup> Another was an association called '*Associazione italiana dei liberi credenti*' ('Italian Association of Liberal Believers'), founded in Venice in 1911 by Methodist minister G. Conte (1859-1917).<sup>253</sup> *De Hervorming* occasionally referred to them.<sup>254</sup> Writing on Conte, the *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* astutely noticed that "the liberal religious movement in predominantly Roman Catholic or orthodox Protestant countries always depends on a leading individual, with which it can more or less be identified."<sup>255</sup> Indeed, in those countries dealt with above that either had a minuscule Protestant community or lacked the infrastructure necessary for liberal Protestant ideas to be spread, a few leading men came to personify the liberal Protestant cause; this was the case with the Kovács brothers in Hungary, Pfeiff and Von Bergen in Sweden, Tallmeister and Kuljus in Estonia, Faure in South Africa, and Goblet d'Alviella and Hocart in Belgium. The same held true for Denmark and Norway, the ecclesial scene of which was comparable to that of Sweden. Kristofer Janson (1841-1917), the founder of a Unitarian congregation in Oslo in 1895, was for a long time the only Norwegian minister who identified as a liberal Protestant. In Denmark, the standard of liberal Protestantism was borne by Unitarian-minded minister U. Birkedal (1852-1931). He established *Det fri Kirkesamfund* (The Free Congregation) in 1900, located in Copenhagen and Aarhus.<sup>256</sup>

As of 1897, a movement fuelled by a liberal Protestant spirit emerged in Austria. Although its aim of stimulating conversions from Roman Catholicism to Protestantism had less to do with theological than with nationalistic motivations, this '*Los von Rom*' ('Away from Rome') movement fostered a mentality that was both oriented on Germany and stamped by German *Kulturprotestantismus*.<sup>257</sup> It accentuated that Austrians were Germans and considered

<sup>251</sup> L. Knappert, 'Roeping', *De Hervorming* 1903-23 (6 June 1903), 177-178; 1905-25 (20 June 1905), 193-195.

<sup>252</sup> R. Rosso and L.M.F. Sudbury, *Introduzione al cristianesimo unitariano* (s.l. 2012), 27. See also: Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism. Socinianism and its Antecedents*, 375-376.

<sup>253</sup> G. Spini, *Italia liberale e protestanti* (Turin 2002), 328. The organisation changed its name into '*Associazione per il progresso morale e religioso*' ('Association for Moral and Religious Progress') in 1921. See: A. Nesti, *Alle radici della Toscana contemporanea. Vita religiosa e società dalla fine dell'Ottocento al crollo della mezzadria* (Milan 2008), 897.

<sup>254</sup> M.H. Schippers, 'Uit Italië', *De Hervorming* 1901-03 (19 January 1901), 18; M.H. Schippers, 'Ter nagedachtenis van een geestverwant in den vreemde', *Ibid.* 1907-19 (11 May 1907), 146-147; H. Oort, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Een godsdienstige beweging in Florence', *Ibid.* 1921-35 (3 September 1921), 275-276; O.H., 'Godsdienst en maatschappij – Een godsdienstig zedelijke vereeniging in Italië', *Ibid.* 1922-50 (16 December 1922), 396; H. Oort, 'Godsdienst en wereldbeschouwing – Een ideaal-school', *Ibid.* 1924-22 (31 May 1924), 170-171.

<sup>255</sup> "*Ten opzichte van de vrijzinnig godsdienstige beweging in overwegend Roomsche Katholieke of orthodox-Protestantsche landen treft telkens weer, hoezeer deze beweging vaak afhankelijk is van een leidende persoonlijkheid, met wie ze min of meer te vereenzelvigen is.*" Quoted from: 'Kerknieuws – De vrijzinnig godsdienstige beweging in Italië', *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant* LXXXIV.138 (20 May 1927), evening paper C, 4.

<sup>256</sup> 'Kerknieuws – Vrijzinnig godsdienstig leven in Denemarken', *Ibid.* LXXXIV.109 (21 April 1927), evening paper C, 2; M.Chr. Uldall-Hansen, *Kristne kættere og unitarisme* (s.l. 1991), 121-125; F. Hale, 'Unitarian Origins in Norway during the 1890s and Early in the Twentieth Century', *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae* XXXI.1 (2005), 225-246.

<sup>257</sup> R. Leeb, 'Der österreichische Protestantismus und die Los-von-Rom-Bewegung', in: Dantine, Thien and Weinzierl (eds.), *Protestantische Mentalitäten*, 195-224, there 199-200. Albertin sees *Kulturprotestantismus* even as a



Protestantism to be the defining characteristic of German culture as well as the force that was responsible for the political, economic and intellectual preponderance of Germany over Habsburg Austria. In the *Los von Rom* movement, the all-dominant Roman Catholic Church with its international character and its rigid dogmas was seen as the suppressor of the true German nature of the Austrian people and was blamed for hindering Austria from flourishing.<sup>258</sup> Because of the apparent liberal Protestant influences in the Austrian *Los von Rom* movement, the German *Protestantenverein* and the *Christliche Welt* eagerly supported it.<sup>259</sup> In NPB circles, it was followed with interest as well. Although it failed to gain popular support – only a small proportion of the middle classes, particularly among German speakers in the Austrian crown lands of Bohemia and Moravia, proved susceptible to its pan-German, anti-Catholic message<sup>260</sup> – and although it was not concerned with the spread of modern theological views as such,<sup>261</sup> the *Los von Rom* movement received quite a lot of attention in *De Hervorming*. The magazine kept a remarkably close track of its development and incited Dutch modernists to financially support it every year between 1903 and 1934.<sup>262</sup>

In the aftermath of the First World War, a similar movement that wanted to break with Rome for a nationalistic reason, and that was equally supported by liberal Protestants in other countries, emerged among Czechs in Bohemia and Moravia, who were now united with Slovaks and Ruthenians in the independent state of Czechoslovakia. Backed by Reformed liberal Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937), who had been elected as the first president of Czechoslovakia in 1918, this movement put forward that the Roman Catholic Church had hindered the Czechs and Slovaks from being themselves. The Church of Rome was identified with the Austrian-Habsburg regime, which had denied Czechs and Slovaks the cultural and political autonomy that ethnic Germans and Hungarians had enjoyed. Moreover, it had ruthlessly obstructed the development of a Czechoslovak identity, the seeds of which had been sown by the early fifteenth-century anti-papal and anti-German movement around Bohemian priest Jan Hus (± 1369-1415). Advocating the use of vernacular Czech during Mass and modifying the Czech alphabet, Hus, whom the Roman Catholic Church had sentenced to the stake and whose followers had been persecuted as heretics, was glorified as the *pater patriae* in the Czechoslovak equivalent of the

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“Voraussetzung” (“precondition”) for the emergence of the *Los von Rom* movement. See: L. Albertin, *Nationalismus und Protestantismus in der österreichischen Los-von-Rom-Bewegung um 1900* (Cologne 1953), 31-42.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, 199; H.W. Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict. Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton 1995), 206; C.E. Murdock, *Changing Places. Society, Culture, and Territory in the Saxon-Bohemian Borderlands, 1870-1946* (Ann Arbor 2012), 70.

<sup>259</sup> Leeb, ‘Der österreichische Protestantismus und die Los-von-Rom-Bewegung’, 200, 209; Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik*, 296; Pichler, *Bürgertum und Protestantismus*, 19. The *Los von Rom* movement also received support from German orthodox Protestants.

<sup>260</sup> Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict*, 211-214; G. Reingrabner, *Protestanten in Österreich. Geschichte und Dokumentation* (Wien etc. 1981), 238.

<sup>261</sup> In urban congregations, the *Los von Rom* movement did manage to foster a liberal climate: “...das zumindest zunächst in den städtischen Gemeinden soetwas wie eine übergreifende deutsch-kulturprotestantisch geprägte Mentalität entstand, die das alte konfessionelle Lutherhum in den Hintergrund drängte.” (“...that, at least in the urban congregations, something as a dominant, German-kulturprotestantische mentality came into existence, which pushed the old confessional Lutheranism into the background.”) Quoted from: Leeb, ‘Der österreichische Protestantismus und die Los-von-Rom-Bewegung’, 208.

<sup>262</sup> As liberal Reformed minister A.L.Th. van der Ven (1868-1934) made clear, modernists’ interest in the *Los von Rom* movement was motivated by the expectation that it would set a precedent for Roman Catholics in the Netherlands, encouraging them to break with Rome as well. [A.L.Th. van der Ven in:] ‘Berichten, enz. – Zestiende Protestantendag in de classis Eindhoven’, *De Hervorming* 1904-45 (5 November 1904), 357.

*Los von Rom* movement.<sup>263</sup> The anti-Roman sentiments that this movement tried to provoke were already slumbering among part of the Czech Catholic clergy, which, feeling inspired by the spirit of liberation that manifested itself in Czech society, called for the right to marry as well as to conduct Mass in Czech instead of Latin.<sup>264</sup> When Rome blew the whistle on them, these priests founded the *Církev československá* (Czechoslovak Church) on 8 January 1920.<sup>265</sup>

Although it was a ‘secession’ of the Roman Catholic Church, keeping an episcopal structure and only implementing modest liturgical reforms, and although it initially associated itself with the Serbian Orthodox Church, the Czechoslovak Church sought alliance with the international liberal Protestant community in the course of the 1920s.<sup>266</sup> As of 1927, it sent delegates to the international conferences of religious liberals.<sup>267</sup> It was accordingly labelled ‘Unitarian’ in English-language publications.<sup>268</sup> Its doctrinally liberal character might have given it a particular appeal to some, but there are three peculiarities with regard to its membership that suggest that the Czechoslovak Church was first and foremost joined for patriotic reasons. First, the Czechoslovak Church grew incredibly fast during the first decades of its existence: in 1930, it already had 800,000 members, corresponding to 5.4 per cent of the population.<sup>269</sup> Before its founding, however, no massive longing for doctrinal freedom had been apparent among Czechs and Slovaks. Second, whereas liberal Protestant communities in other countries mostly consisted of members with a bourgeois background, the Czechoslovak Church recruited most of its members from “the socially dependent classes.” In comparison to both the Czechoslovak population as a whole and the social composition of other churches in Czechoslovakia, lower- and lower-middle-class individuals were disproportionately represented in the membership of the Czechoslovak Church.<sup>270</sup> Apparently, lower-class individuals in Czechoslovakia had an incentive to join a church with a doctrinally liberal orientation that those in other countries did not have. In light of the Czechoslovak context and the pretension of the

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<sup>263</sup> P. Ramet, ‘Christianity and National Heritage among the Czechs and Slovaks’, in: P. Ramet (ed.), *Religion and Nationalism in Soviet and East European Politics* (Durham and London 1989), 264-285, there 272-273; A. Suppan, ‘Catholic People’s Parties in East Central Europe. The Bohemian Lands and Slovakia’, in: W. Kaiser and H. Wohnout (eds.), *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-1945* (London 2004), 178-192, there 181-182. Masaryk considered Hus’s “Czech Reformation as the greatest achievement of Czech history and an important contribution to mankind as it introduced democratic ideas into Medieval Europe.” Quoted from: P. Drulák, ‘Central Europe and IR Thinking. Traditions and Disciplines’, in: Z. Šabič and P. Drulák (eds.), *Regional and International Relations of Central Europe* (Basingstoke and New York 2012), 18-39, there 25.

<sup>264</sup> C.G. Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia* (Westport and London 2006), 34; J. Pollard, *The Papacy in the Age of Totalitarianism, 1914-1958* (Oxford 2014), 226.

<sup>265</sup> Called ‘*Církev československá husitská*’ (‘Czechoslovak Hussite Church’) from 1971 onwards.

<sup>266</sup> Cravens, *Culture and Customs of the Czech Republic and Slovakia*, 34.

<sup>267</sup> F.M. Hník, ‘The Czechoslovak Church and the Christian World’, in: F.M. Hník, A. Spisar and F. Kovář, *The Czechoslovak Church* (Prague 1937), 9-52, there 33, 40. President Masaryk had already been present at the 1907 international conference in Boston. See: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 184.

<sup>268</sup> E.g.: J. Hajda, ‘Sociological Aspects’, in: J. Hajda (ed.), *A Study of Contemporary Czechoslovakia* (Chicago 1955), 56-256, there 242; D. Rodnick, *The Strangled Democracy. Czechoslovakia 1948-1969* (Lubbock 1970), 96. The first patriarch of the Czechoslovak Church, Karel Farský (1880-1927), followed a pro-Unitarian course. See: L. Němec, *The Czechoslovak Heresy and Schism. The Emergence of a National Czechoslovak Church* (Philadelphia 1975), 60. An actual Unitarian congregation was established in Prague in 1921. Its founder, N.F. Čapek (1870-1942), attracted a following of 3,500 people. See: Harris, *The A to Z of Unitarian Universalism*, 135-136.

<sup>269</sup> B.F. Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation. Czech Culture and the Rise of Communism* (Lanham etc. 2004), 78.

<sup>270</sup> Hník, ‘The Czechoslovak Church and the Christian World’, 17-21. The quote is on p. 20. See also: Abrams, *The Struggle for the Soul of the Nation*, 79.

Czechoslovak Church to be the patron of the national identity, it is most obvious to presume that this incentive was a nationalistic one. Third, the Czechoslovak Church had hardly any support among Slovaks. The latter thus lacked an incentive to join that Czechs did have. It made sense to depict the Roman Catholic Church as the ecclesial twin of a regime that had suppressed indigenous ethnic culture in Bohemia and Moravia, which had fallen under Austrian jurisdiction prior to 1918, but not to depict it as such in Slovakia. Whereas Slovaks were predominantly Catholic, Slovakia had been an integral part of predominantly Lutheran Upper Hungary. There, membership of the Roman Catholic Church had hence served rather as an identity marker, as a sign of Slovak resistance against Magyarisation.<sup>271</sup> Moreover, Slovaks could identify less with the idea of Hussite heritage as the foundation of a shared Czechoslovak identity, than could Czechs.<sup>272</sup>

## 11. Means of Contact

As early as the 1870s, the *Protestantenbond* and its sister associations abroad were eager to keep in touch.<sup>273</sup> Sending delegates to each other's annual meetings was one means to establish this. Between 1873 and 1898, foreign delegates who attended the annual NPB meetings were invited to give a short speech as part of what was called '*Protestantendag*'. Annual NPB meetings lasted two days and were usually scheduled for the last week of October.<sup>274</sup> This was done to enforce liberal Protestants' claim to be the true heirs to the Reformation, as the last day of October, called 'Reformation Day' in Protestantism, commemorates the proclamation of Luther's ninety-five theses against wrongs of the Roman Catholic Church on 31 October 1517, and as such marks the genesis of Protestantism. The *Protestantendag* included those elements of the annual NPB meetings that had nothing to do with organisational affairs of the NPB itself, such as a religious service held on the evening of the first day, and lectures devoted to ecclesial and social affairs held on the second day.<sup>275</sup> Modelled on the *Protestantentage* of the *Protestantenverein* and the *Reformtage* of the *Verein für freies Christentum*, the *Protestantendag* was supposed to be a public manifestation of liberal Protestant vigour, making liberal Protestantism literally visible to the outside world, and was, contrary to the discussions on NPB-related matters that constituted the other part of the annual meeting, open to the general public. Every year, a different branch was assigned to host the annual meeting, in order to give people throughout the Netherlands the opportunity to get to know the modernist movement and to make clear that the NPB was represented all across the country. The welcoming of foreign delegates and the speeches these delegates gave were therefore included in the programme of the public *Protestantendag* and not in the private discussions to which only delegates of NPB branches were allowed to contribute, in order to show to the outside world that the Dutch modernist movement was part of a larger international liberal Protestant movement. Accordingly, even more important than the content of their speeches, which were usually short updates on the vicissitudes of the associations that had delegated them, was foreign

<sup>271</sup> J. Luxmoore and J. Babiuch, *The Vatican and the Red Flag. The Struggle for the Soul of Eastern Europe* (London and New York 1999), 34.

<sup>272</sup> A. Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (Oxford etc. 2009), 123.

<sup>273</sup> See also: Krijger, 'De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web', 55-57.

<sup>274</sup> An exception was the annual NPB meeting of 1914, which was held, due to the outbreak of the First World War, on 22 December that year. See: I.M.J. Hoog, 'Officiële mededeelingen', *De Hervorming* 1914-35 (29 August 1914), 303-304; [H. de Lang], 'Berichten en mededeelingen – De algemeene vergadering', *Ibid.* 1914-52 (26 December 1914), 440.

<sup>275</sup> As explained in: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'De Protestantendag te Deventer', *Ibid.* 1889-44 (2 November 1889), 174.

guests' presence as such.<sup>276</sup> After the termination of the custom to have the public part of the annual meetings chaired by an honorary president, effectuated with the modification of the rules and regulations of the NPB in 1898, the name '*Protestantendag*' disappeared. Afterwards, though they continued to be split into a private and a public part, the annual meetings gradually lost their propagandistic character – reflecting the decreasing triumphalism in NPB circles. Moreover, the frequency with which foreign delegates attended the NPB meetings gradually decreased as well – as of 1901, the international conferences, about which more is said below, became the platforms for liberal Protestants from different countries to meet each other.

Particularly between the 1870s and the 1900s, the annual NPB meetings could almost always welcome at least one foreign delegate and often several delegates. If the *Protestantenverein*, the *Verein für freies Christentum*, the *Union protestante libérale d'Alsace et de Lorraine*, British Unitarians and French liberal Protestants were unable to be represented, they sent a letter or a telegram in which they expressed their feelings of solidarity with Dutch modernists.<sup>277</sup> They usually sent the same delegate each year that they were able to represent themselves. German Lutheran J.R. Hanne (1842-1923), for example, attended the NPB meetings of 1884, 1885, 1886, 1888, 1889, 1893 and 1895. P.W. Wicksteed was present at the meetings of 1880, 1882 and 1886 on behalf of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. In turn, the NPB tried to be represented at the German *Protestantentag*, the Swiss *Reformtag* and the annual meetings of British Unitarians and French and Alsatian liberal Protestants as well. Because Dutch liberal Protestant ministers were less confronted with a language barrier than their foreign colleagues – while only a few of the latter could understand Dutch, many of the former had a sufficient command of French and German –, the NPB was less compelled to always send the same delegate to the same country: only Swiss-born Walloon Reformed minister C.G. Chavannes was delegated to the *Reformtag* more than once, in 1878, 1880 and 1889.<sup>278</sup>

Convening international conferences was a second means with which liberal Protestants from all across the globe maintained interrelationships. The idea to do so had taken root after the Chicago world fair of 1893, during which a 'World's Parliament of Religions' was convened as a platform for interreligious dialogue. As the driving forces behind the whole endeavour, liberal Protestants were overrepresented in this 'parliament'.<sup>279</sup> The decision to actually organise

<sup>276</sup> On the *Protestantendagen*, see: Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvoerbond*, 11-16.

<sup>277</sup> Carl von Bergen, the leader of the Swedish *Protestantföreningen*, visited the German *Protestantentag* of 1885 and had been invited to attend the Dutch *Protestantendag* a year earlier. Although he had been unable to come and had promised to be present at a future *Protestantendag*, Von Bergen never redeemed his promise. See: H.U. Meyboom, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvoerbond – Dr. Carl von Bergen', *De Hervorming* 1884-44 (1 November 1884), 176-177; H.U. Meyboom and J.W. Lieftinck, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvoerbond – De Duitsche Protestantendag', *Ibid.* 1885-23 (6 June 1885), 89-90; 'Buitenland – De vijfde Protestantendag te Hamburg', *Ibid.* 1885-25 (20 June 1885), 98-99, there 98; Meyboom, *De Nederlandsche Protestantenvoerbond*, 12.

<sup>278</sup> He was supposed to attend the *Reformtag* in 1884, but was unable to do so. The NPB could not find someone to replace him. See: H.U. Meyboom, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenvoerbond', *De Hervorming* 1884-26 (28 June 1884), 104.

<sup>279</sup> D. Lüddeckens, *Das Weltparlament der Religionen von 1893. Strukturen interreligiöser Begegnung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin and New York 2002); J. Kloos, 'Religion – Chicago', in: R. Sisson, Chr.K. Zacher and A.R.L. Clayton (eds.), *The American Midwest. An Interpretive Encyclopedia* (Bloomington and Indianapolis 2007), 708-711, there 709; A.L. Molendijk, 'To Unite Religion Against All Irreligion. The 1893 World Parliament of Religions', *Journal for the History of Modern Theology / Zeitschrift für Neuere Theologiegeschichte* XVIII (2011), 228-250. In *De Hervorming*, the parliament was even announced as a congress of religious liberals. See: 'Buitenland – Het internationaal vrijzinnig godsdienstcongres', *De Hervorming* 1892-34 (20 August 1892), 135. F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. attended the parliament on behalf of the NPB and shared his impressions with the readership of the *Nieuwe Rotterdamse Courant* in a series of articles, reissued in a separate volume as: *Het parlement der godsdiensten*

an international conference explicitly meant to further the cause of liberal Protestantism was taken during the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the AUA, held in Boston on 25 May 1900. To quote Unitarian C.W. Wendte (1844-1931), all celebrants, among them Hocart, Bracciforti, a representative of the *Protestantenverein*, and Unitarians from the United Kingdom and Transylvania, agreed with each other that “a permanent organization should be effected to bring into closer union, for exchange of ideas, mutual service, and promotion of their common aims, the scattered liberal congregations, and isolated thinkers and workers for religious freedom, in many lands.”<sup>280</sup> Christened the ‘International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers’, a first conference took place in London in 1901. It consisted of a series of lectures in which delegates of different groups informed each other about the religious state of affairs in their respective countries.<sup>281</sup> A second gathering was held in Amsterdam in 1903, which accentuated the strong position the Dutch modernist movement had within international liberal Protestantism.<sup>282</sup> Two years later, a third conference was organised in Geneva and in 1907, religious liberals, including one Hindu, one Jew and one Muslim, gathered in Boston for a fourth international congress.<sup>283</sup> The president of this last meeting, American Unitarian S.A. Eliot (1862-1950), gave an impassioned lecture in which he stated that the attendance of these non-Christians was the manifestation of a fundamental change in both intra- and interfaith relationships. The traditional lines dividing religious communities from each other were gradually transforming into an antithesis that no longer separated adherents of one religion from those of *other* religions, but which radically cut through communities of adherents of the *same* religion:

To say a man is an Episcopalian or a Presbyterian, a Lutheran or a Calvinist, a Catholic or Protestant or Jew no longer defines his spirit or his convictions. [...] The progressive men of all communions feel themselves in closer sympathy with men of the same spirit in other communions than with those of an opposite temper in their own, while the reactionaries of all communions are drawn together by their common opposition to the theological reconstruction which modern knowledge demands. The traditional and historic dividing-lines grow dim, but the new alignments grow more and more distinct.<sup>284</sup>

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(Rotterdam 1893). See also: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. in:] *Beschrijving Protestantendag 1893*, 49-62; F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., ‘Wat het “Parlement der godsdiensten leerde”’, *De Hervorming* 1893-44 (4 November 1893), 174; 1893-45 (11 November 1893), 178.

<sup>280</sup> C.W. Wendte, ‘The Report of the General Secretary’, in: W. Copeland Bowie (ed.), *Liberal Religious Thought at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century. Addresses and Papers at the International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers, held in London, May, 1901* (London 1901), 321-329, there 321-322. See also: *Seventy-Fifth Anniversary of the American Unitarian Association, Boston, May 20-27* ([Boston 1900]). The NPB was not represented at the anniversary, as no one was able to attend it. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Berichten, enz.’, *De Hervorming* 1900-21 (26 May 1900), 157.

<sup>281</sup> Its proceedings were published in: Copeland Bowie (ed.), *Liberal Religious Thought at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century*.

<sup>282</sup> Called the ‘*Internationaal congres van vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen*’ (‘International Congress of Religious Liberals’). Its proceedings were published in: P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. (ed.), *Religion and Liberty. Addresses and Papers at the Second International Council of Unitarian and Other Liberal Religious Thinkers and Workers, held in Amsterdam, September, 1903* (Leiden 1904).

<sup>283</sup> The 1905 conference was called ‘*Congrès international du christianisme libéral et progressif*’ (‘International Congress of Liberal and Progressive Christianity’). Its proceedings were published in: Montet (ed.), *Actes du III<sup>me</sup> Congrès international du christianisme libéral et progressif, Genève, 1905*. The 1907 conference was called ‘Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals’. Its proceedings were published in: Wendte (ed.), *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion*. The presence of a “Brahmin”, Jew and “Mahometan” is mentioned on p. 63.

<sup>284</sup> Quoted from: S.A. Eliot, ‘Opening Address of the President’, in: Wendte (ed.), *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion*, 48-52, there 49.

To encourage this process and to more firmly integrate non-Protestants from all across the globe into the emerging international movement of religious liberals, the fifth assembly, held in Berlin in 1910, changed the original name of the International Council into ‘International Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals’.<sup>285</sup> Nonetheless, this name change did not have the desired effect: until the 1930s, the only groups outside of Europe and the United States who structurally participated in the conferences were Japanese Unitarians and the Indian Brahmo Samaj movement, while only the latter, notwithstanding the strong influence Anglo-Saxon Unitarianism exerted on it, was not rooted in Protestantism.<sup>286</sup>

One of the most memorable speeches delivered at the 1910 conference or even at any of the pre-war international conferences of religious liberals, was given by Rauschenbusch.<sup>287</sup> Without arguing that all religious liberals should join social democratic parties, he urged them to recognise “a greater leaning towards State interference for the protection of the worker, and altogether a readiness to extend the functions of the State [...] as historically inevitable.” He “begged” them to follow “the steps of progress in America with love and with attention,” implying that they should all embrace the Social Gospel.<sup>288</sup> At the sixth conference, convened in Paris in 1913, Dutch social democrat S.K. Bakker took up Rauschenbusch’s 1910 lecture by giving a speech with a more overt party political undertone on ‘religion and the proletariat’.<sup>289</sup> In his eyes, liberal Protestants should strive after the synthesis of their movement with social democracy. Since ‘proletarians’ – the terminology is Bakker’s – would never return to conservative Catholicism, Calvinism or Lutheranism, religious liberals, being the upholders of freedom and renewal, should definitively take sides with them and help them to achieve the material and spiritual liberty for which they yearned.<sup>290</sup> As these examples may indicate, theological issues had no prevalence over social questions, included matters related to the role of women in contemporary society. To stimulate reflection upon these matters, an ‘International Union of Liberal Christian Women’, provisionally established three years earlier, was officially constituted at the 1913 congress in Paris.<sup>291</sup>

In Paris, plans were made to organise a next international congress in London in 1916. However, the First World War threw a spanner in the works. It was only as late as 1927 that a seventh international convention of religious liberals was summoned. Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia, was chosen as the venue, because of the extraordinary growth of the Czechoslovak Church.<sup>292</sup> Two smaller, preliminary convocations had been held between the

<sup>285</sup> Its proceedings were published in: Wendte and Davis (eds.), *Fifth International Congress of Free Christianity and Religious Progress*. The name change is mentioned on p. 6.

<sup>286</sup> For the involvement of the Brahmo Samaj with the IARF, see: K. Dasgupta, ‘100 Years of the IARF in India’, in: *Centennial Reflections*, 42-47.

<sup>287</sup> R. Traer, ‘A Short History of the IARF’, in: *Ibid.*, 17-32, there 17-18.

<sup>288</sup> Quoted from: W. Rauschenbusch, ‘The Social Awakening in the Churches of America’, in: Wendte and Davis (eds.), *Fifth International Congress of Free Christianity and Religious Progress*, 563-567, there 566-567.

<sup>289</sup> Its proceedings were published in: J.E. Viénot and P. Fargues (eds.), *Travaux du 6<sup>e</sup> Congrès international du progrès religieux (chrétiens progressifs et libres-croyants)*, Paris, 1913 (Paris 1913).

<sup>290</sup> S.K. Bakker, ‘La religion et le prolétariat’, in: *Ibid.*, 281-286.

<sup>291</sup> Dutch modernist women were affiliated to this union through a national organisation called ‘Vriendschaps-gilde’ (‘Guild of Friendship’), which statutorily was a *bevriende kring* of the *Protestantenbond*. The term ‘bevriende kring’ implied that this organisation was integrated into the framework of the NPB, while enjoying autonomy. See: T.A. van Eck, ‘Vriendschaps-gilde, bevriende kring van den Nederl. Protestantenvond’, *De Hervorming* 1913-16 (19 April 1913), 122.

<sup>292</sup> G.H. van Senden, ‘Buitenland – Tsjecho-Slowakije’, *Ibid.* 1927-06 (4 June 1927), 43-44.

end of the First World War in 1918, and 1927, but these gatherings, of which the first took place in Boston in 1920 and the second in Leiden in 1922, did not consist of the same large number of lectures and did not bring together as many participants as the conferences held before 1914.<sup>293</sup> Roessingh was one of the key figures at this last gathering; in fact, his 1922 article referred to at the beginning of this chapter was published in the build-up to this gathering, with which he intended to regenerate the international liberal religious movement. British Unitarian W.H. Drummond (1863-1945), who had succeeded Wendte as the secretary of the International Congress of Free Christians and Other Religious Liberals shortly after the 1920 gathering, had probably approached Roessingh and several other Dutch modernists to take the lead in this regeneration due to the neutral position the Netherlands had taken during the First World War and the organisational skills Dutch modernists had shown in the field of youth work.

Only a small group of liberal Protestants, from twelve different countries, convened in Leiden in 1922. Some controversy became manifest when several attendants, echoing Bakker's previously mentioned 1910 lecture, argued that liberal religion could only fulfil its vocation if all religious liberals unanimously took a social democratic stance.<sup>294</sup> This disagreement did not prevent the attendants from reaching consensus on the creation of an international union of liberal Christian students and a quarterly bulletin.<sup>295</sup> However, due to increased tensions between France and Germany, a scheduled conference in Cologne, to be held in 1924, had to be cancelled. As said, it was therefore not until 1927 that the first large-scale post-War international congress of religious liberals took place. Due to a lack of preparation and the absence of a central theme, the initial enthusiasm and expectations accompanying the Prague meeting disappeared.<sup>296</sup> To make sure that the disappointing conference in Prague would not thwart the hoped-for resurgence of the international liberal Protestant movement, it was decided at the next congress, held in the Dutch town of Arnhem in 1930, to institute a permanent secretariat. Although American Unitarians continued to be its prime financiers, the organisational centre of the movement called 'International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom' as of 1932, now came to be located in the Netherlands.<sup>297</sup>

Staffed by the CC and led by Remonstrant minister L.J. van Holk (1893-1982), the secretariat of the IARF was entrusted with the coordination of joint activities and the preparation of international conferences, the first of which organised under its direction was held in Copenhagen in 1934. Moreover, it was given the task of establishing relations with liberal-minded religious communities that were not yet involved in the IARF. As early as 1931, it managed to do

<sup>293</sup> The numbering of the post-War conferences is rather confusing. The meeting held in Copenhagen in 1934 was called the 'Eleventh International Congress of Religious Liberals', whereas there had only been one official gathering held between the congresses in Prague (numbered as the *seventh*) and in Copenhagen – in Arnhem in 1930 –, and one unofficial conference in Sankt Gallen in 1932. If this last convention is not taken into account, the conference in Copenhagen should have been the *ninth*. However, if the conferences in Boston and The Hague are included in the list of international meetings of religious liberals, the conference in Copenhagen was indeed the eleventh.

<sup>294</sup> M.C. van Mourik Broekman, 'Hoofdartikel – Internationaal vrij-religieus congres', *De Hervorming* 1922-36 (9 September 1922), 282-283, there 282. A similar plea was made in: [P. Eldering], 'In den stroom – Een bijeenkomst van vrijzinnig-godsdienstigen', *De Stroom* I.39 (9 September 1922), 2-3, there 3.

<sup>295</sup> Traer, 'A Short History of the IARF', 21.

<sup>296</sup> Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 222. See also: G.J. Heering, 'Uit den vreemde – Het vrijzinnig-godsdienstig congres te Praag', *De Stroom* VI.43 (1 October 1927), 2.

<sup>297</sup> The term 'Liberal Christianity' was definitively dropped in 1969. See: M. Braybrooke, *Pilgrimage of Hope. One Hundred Years of Global Interfaith Dialogue* (London 1992), 51.

so with the *Iglesia Filipina Independiente* (Philippine Independent Church), a denomination that had come into being in 1902 as a secession from the Roman Catholic Church, as had the Czechoslovak Church in 1920, and was, again similarly to the Czechoslovak Church (yet to a lesser extent), influenced by Unitarianism.<sup>298</sup> Due to the efforts of the secretariat, religious liberals from South Africa and Spain and a representative of the *Biserica Română Unită cu Roma, Greco-Catolică* (Romanian Church United with Rome, Greek Catholic) could be welcomed at the Copenhagen meeting.<sup>299</sup> Contrasting with the affiliation of these new contacts was the absence of German liberal Protestants, caused by growing international unease with German politics, at both this conference and the next one, which convened in Oxford in 1937. Between 1939 and 1945, the Second World War shattered the international liberal religious movement for a second time. Yet, the permanent secretariat simply reopened afterwards, making it much easier to re-establish relations than it had been after the First World War. The IARF continued to organise international conferences, of which three were held in the Netherlands.<sup>300</sup>

The periodical press was a third means with which liberal Protestants from different countries kept in touch. As M.C. van Mourik Broekman explained in 1922, “[liberal Protestants] can influence each other by exchanging periodicals, also by specifically writing for each other.”<sup>301</sup> And so they did. Just as the opinion magazines affiliated to liberal Protestant communities outside of the Netherlands, *De Hervorming* had a separate section devoted to foreign news items. Next to N.C. Balsem, whom the then newly-appointed editor-in-chief F.W.N. Hugenholtz put in charge of the foreign affairs section in late 1876, other Dutch modernists who had a particular interest in or knowledge of the religious state of affairs in one particular country were invited to regularly contribute to this section as well.<sup>302</sup> For example, A. Kuenen, who knew some leading British Unitarians personally, wrote about developments in British church life between 1877 and 1884.<sup>303</sup> From 1882 until 1884, H.U. Meyboom, whose entire family showed much interest in Scandinavian culture, reported on the emergence of the liberal Protestant groups in Sweden

<sup>298</sup> F.H. Wise, *The History of the Philippine Independent Church (Iglesia Filipina Independiente)* (s.l. 1965), 211-219; Greenwood and Harris, *An Introduction to the Unitarian and Universalist Traditions*, 107-110.

<sup>299</sup> ‘Berichten en mededeelingen – Internationaal Congres voor Vrijzinnig Christendom en Geloofsvrijheid te Kopenhagen’, *De Hervorming* 1934-07 (24 July 1934), 56.

<sup>300</sup> In Amsterdam in 1949, in The Hague in 1964, and in Noordwijkerhout in 1981. For the international conferences of religious liberals held after 1937, see: Traer, ‘A Short History of the IARF’, 23-32.

<sup>301</sup> “*Wederzijds kan men elkander beïnvloeden door periodieken toe te zenden, ook door speciaal voor elkander te schrijven.*” Quoted from: M.C. van Mourik Broekman, ‘Hoofdartikel – Internationaal vrij-religieus congres’, *De Hervorming*, 9 September 1922 (1922-36), 282-283, there 283.

<sup>302</sup> De Lang states that Balsem could only fulfil his duties as co-editor of the foreign affairs sections “for five years” (“...slechts vijf jaren...”), being forced to step down in 1883 due to health problems. This means that his involvement with the section started in 1878. Between 1883 and 1884, Dutch Reformed minister A.F. Kamp (1845-1919) temporarily replaced him. See: H. de Lang, “De Hervorming” 50 jaar – Een groot middenstuk’, *Ibid.* 1925-47 (21 November 1925), 369-370, there 369; ‘Kamp (Nicolaas)’, in: De Bie and Loosjes (eds.), *Biographisch woordenboek van protestantsche godgeleerden* IV, 655-656, there 655, note 2. According to Kalma, however, Balsem edited the foreign affairs section of *De Hervorming* for thirteen years, meaning that he had started doing so in 1871, when the magazine was still called ‘*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*’. See: Kalma, ‘Balsem, Nicolaas Cornelis’, 29. In an 1876 article, Balsem himself implied that he had been the editor of the section ‘*Kroniek*’ (‘Chronicle’), a section which F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. had abolished. He had probably been so as of the death of the former editor of this section, A.F. Mackensteen, in 1875. In that same 1876 article, Balsem declared that Hugenholtz had asked him to exclusively write on foreign affairs. See: N.C. Balsem, ‘Buitenland’, *De Hervorming* 1876-47 (23 November 1876), 2-3, there 2.

<sup>303</sup> Eighty-four articles in total. See: C. Houtman, ‘Colenso as Seen by Kuenen, and as Known from Colenso’s Letters to Kuenen’, in: J.A. Draper (ed.), *The Eye of the Storm. Bishop John William Colenso and the Crisis of Biblical Interpretation* (London and New York 2003), 76-103, there 102, note 54.



mentioned earlier in this chapter.<sup>304</sup> In addition, non-Dutch liberal Protestants occasionally informed the readership of *De Hervorming* of ecclesial and social life in their respective countries. Among these ‘foreign correspondents’ were Swiss Reformed minister P. Böhlinger (1852-1929) in the period 1883-1886, British Unitarian minister Travers Herford between 1889 and 1897, and French Reformed minister P. Mounier (1832-?) from 1896 until 1901.<sup>305</sup> In turn, Dutch modernists reported on what was going on in the Netherlands in the foreign counterparts of *De Hervorming*. Examples include Walloon Reformed minister A.G. van Hamel, who sporadically contributed to *Le Progrès Religieux* in the late 1870s and early 1880s, and Mennonite professor S. Cramer, who published several articles in the *Protestantische Kirchenzeitung für das evangelische Deutschland* (*Protestant Church Newspaper for Evangelical Germany*), linked to the *Protestantenverein*, between 1883 and 1887.<sup>306</sup>

Those who were sent as delegates to the annual general assemblies of liberal Protestant associations abroad often wrote about their experiences. In 1879, for example, Alsatian Lutheran minister L. Leblois (1825-1898) dedicated a series of articles in *Le Progrès Religieux* to the impressions that the Dutch modernist movement had made on him at the 1878 NPB assembly, which he had attended as the representative of the *Union protestante libérale d’Alsace et de Lorraine*.<sup>307</sup> He looked on Dutch modernism with great admiration: among the world-leading liberal Protestant theologians of the time, he noticed, Dutchmen were well represented. The belief that that they were true heirs to the Reformation that prevailed among modernists at the time, addressed in chapter 3, caused Leblois to “not doubt that the perseverance of the members of the *Protestantenbond* will bring the principle of doctrinal freedom for which [these members] long, to triumph in church life.”<sup>308</sup> In 1885, J.R. Hanne, who had been present at the annual NPB assembly on behalf of the *Protestantenverein*, devoted similar words of praise to the Dutch modernist movement.<sup>309</sup> Yet, as time progressed, foreign guests at the annual NPB meetings began to sing a different tune in their reports. In 1903, British Unitarian P.W. Wicksteed, who had been delegated to NPB assemblies several times, disappointedly noticed that liberal

<sup>304</sup> Referred to in: Lindeboom, *Geschiedenis van het vrijzinnig protestantisme* III, 178, note 2. His father L.S.P. Meyboom (1817-1874) was interested in Scandinavian languages and culture, while his half-sister M.A.S. Meyboom (1856-1927) was fluent in Danish and became a translator of Danish and Norwegian literature. See: E.H.R. Duyvendak and D.Ch. Grit, ‘Margaretha Meyboom. Not Only a Translator’, in: S. van Dijk et al. (eds.), *“I Have Heard about You”. Foreign Women’s Writing Crossing the Dutch Border: From Sappho to Selma Lagerlöf* (Hilversum 2004), 324-331.

<sup>305</sup> P. Böhlinger was not related to prominent Lutheran NPB member J.A. Böhlinger, whose family was originally from Germany. P. Mounier, born in Amsterdam and migrated to France sometime in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, was a son of P.J.J. Mounier (1801-1889), who became the minister of the Walloon Reformed congregation in Leeuwarden in 1826, went to Antwerp in 1827, and served the Walloon Reformed congregation in Amsterdam from 1830 until 1868. Between 1858 and 1878, he was (also) a minister at the court of the Dutch king William III (1817-1890). See: N. Beets (P. van Zonneveld ed.), *Het dagboek van de student Nicolaas Beets, 1833-1836* (The Hague 1983), 133, note 501; J. de Jong-Slagman, *Hofpredikers in de negentiende eeuw. Een carrière bij de koning* (Hilversum 2013), 208-214.

<sup>306</sup> The latter’s contributions to the *Protestantische Kirchenzeitung* were published under the heading ‘Aus Holland’ (‘From Holland’). Mentioned in: Kühler, ‘Levensbericht van Dr. S. Cramer’, 96-97.

<sup>307</sup> L. Leblois, ‘Lettres de Hollande’, *Le Progrès Religieux* XI.47 (23 November 1878), 373-374; XI.49 (7 December 1878), 388-390; XI.50 (14 December 1878), 395-397; XI.51 (21 December 1878), 403-407. These articles were collectively published as: L. Leblois, *Lettres de Hollande* (Paris 1879).

<sup>308</sup> “Nous ne doutons pas que la persévérance des membres du *Protestantenbond* ne parvienne [...] à faire triompher, dans le sein des Eglises, le principe de liberté qu’ils réclament si énergiquement.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>309</sup> [J.R. Hanne in:] ‘Buitenland – De Duitsche afgevaardigden weêr tehuis’, *De Hervorming* 1885-47 (21 November 1885), 187.

Protestantism had “seemed to conquer the Netherlands by storm” in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, but had now lost “the boldness and pride of its youth” altogether. Praising the theological brilliance of Scholten, Kuenen, Tiele, Rauwenhoff, Hooykaas and Oort, Wicksteed lamented in *The Inquirer*, a Unitarian opinion magazine, that only the latter was still alive. Apparently, Wicksteed felt that Dutch modernism had failed to produce a next generation of theologians with as much prestige as those mentioned above, for he resolutely concluded that “in my opinion, its heydays are in the past.” As for the modernist movement, he regretted that it had fallen short of expectations.<sup>310</sup> Articles such as those of Leblois, Hanne and Wicksteed are particularly significant, as they perfectly reflected the spirit of the age in Dutch modernist circles.

To return to *De Hervorming*, H. de Lang took care of its foreign affairs section as of 1884. That year, then editor-in-chief Hugenholtz found him willing to replace both Kuenen, who could no longer combine his editorial involvement with the magazine with his professorship, and the recently deceased N.C. Balsem. De Lang continued to write on the development of liberal Protestantism outside of the Netherlands until his retirement at the end of 1917. He was not replaced in his role of foreign news editor: with the editorial reform of *De Hervorming*, effectuated at the beginning of January 1918, foreign affairs were no longer reported upon altogether. This decision was symptomatic of Dutch modernists’ preoccupation with their own marginalisation in Dutch society: the 1918 editorial reform as such was meant to let modernism exert a stronger influence on national intellectual life. Reflections upon what happened abroad were apparently seen as not contributing to that goal. Because he wanted to give the new editorial board a fair chance, De Lang did not express any public disapproval with the 1918 editorial reform.<sup>311</sup> However, after another editorial reform in 1925, he made clear that he had regretted the disappearance of the foreign affairs section. Echoing Roessingh’s previously quoted 1922 article, he noticed “that we, religious liberals in diverse countries, were standing much closer to each other in those days.”<sup>312</sup>

H. Oort was equally displeased with the absence of regularly published articles on liberal Protestantism abroad – not only in *De Hervorming*, but also in the magazines that had come to fulfil many of the functions it had previously had, mentioned in chapter 2. In late 1926, he argued that *De Hervorming* could be given new relevance if it would offer something these other magazines lacked: foreign news. “We, Dutchmen and Dutchwomen of a liberal Protestant persuasion,” he enforced his argument, “do not stand alone.” Everywhere in Europe, “signs of liberal Protestant life are evident. And we fail to notice them?”<sup>313</sup> As De Lang and Oort recognised, the periodical press played a vital role in keeping the international liberal Protestant movement alive. *De Hervorming* fostered a sense of belonging, the psychological significance

<sup>310</sup> “...de groote moderne beweging, die Nederland stormenderhand scheen in te nemen.”; “...het koene en triomfantelijke harer jeugd, dat is voor mij weg.”; “...voor mij ligt de heldentijd in het verleden.” Quoted in: [P.H. Wicksteed in: H. de Lang], ‘Wicksteeds herinneringen’, *Ibid.* 1903-36 (5 September 1903), 285-286.

<sup>311</sup> [H. de Lang], ‘Redactioneel – De plannen met ons blad’, *Ibid.* 1917-41 (13 October 1917), 339-340.

<sup>312</sup> “Het lijkt me of wij vrijzinnigen in de verschillende landen zooveel nader aan elkaar toe stonden, toen.” Quoted from: H. de Lang, “‘De Hervorming’ 50 jaar – Een groot middenstuk’, *Ibid.* 1925-47 (21 November 1925), 369-370, there 370.

<sup>313</sup> “Wij, Nederlanders van vrijzinnig godsdienstige richting, staan hierin niet alleen; in vele landen openbaart zij zich op zeer verschillende wijzen. [...] Ook in andere landen ontbreken de levensteekenen niet. En wij blijven er onbekend mee?” Quoted from: H. Oort, ‘De toekomst van “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.*, 16 October 1926 (1926-42), 331-332. Oort was convinced that extensively reporting on foreign affairs would lead to an increase in the number of subscribers.

of which has been explained in chapter 2, not only within the imagined community of modernists in the Netherlands, but also across national boundaries. Moreover, by keeping a close track on the developments in liberal Protestantism elsewhere, Dutch modernists might gain new insights on how to realise ecclesial and social reforms.

Editor-in-chief Junod and the executive board of the NPB demonstrably took De Lang's and Oort's *cris de cœur* seriously: they did not follow Oort's advice to appoint one editor per country or cluster of countries, but they did decide to reintroduce the foreign affairs section as of January 1927. Although he had a rather isolated position among modernists – theologically speaking, he had moved from the right wing of the modernist movement, identifying as 'algemeen-vrijzinnig' in the 1910s, to its extreme left wing, propagating a pantheistic outlook on life known as 'psychological monism' since the early 1920s –, G.H. van Senden was nevertheless asked to be foreign news editor. He was more than likely approached not because of his singular theological views, but because he had already won his spurs in the field of journalism.<sup>314</sup> It was for this same reason that, after the editors appointed in 1918 had been repeatedly blamed for their alembicated style of writing, the executive board of the NPB had appointed Junod as editor-in-chief two years earlier.<sup>315</sup> Accepting the offer, Van Senden edited the foreign affairs section very differently to Kuenen and De Lang: rather than factually reporting on liberal Protestantism abroad, he reflected upon foreign political developments from his own modernist perspective. Russian bolshevism, Italian fascism and German Nazism were his main subjects of interest. His opinion on all of these three currents was ambivalent. Van Senden praised bolshevism for striking at the roots of the capitalist economic system, a system he disliked, but criticised it for treating man as a 'machine' and suppressing individuality.<sup>316</sup> Fascism made a more favourable impression on him, though he rejected its militaristic traits. While bolshevism had the intention of exterminating religion, fascism made a polite, albeit insincere, bow towards it.<sup>317</sup> What is more, Van Senden urged his fellow modernists to interpret the rise of National Socialism against the background of Germany's defeat in the First World War and the unjust war reparations that the Versailles Treaty had imposed on the German people.<sup>318</sup> As these examples indicate, Van Senden was, to quote himself, not afraid to "voice a different opinion than the opinions usually voiced in our circles."<sup>319</sup> His articles were therefore controversial, yet at the same time ensured that *De Hervorming* continued to be relevant outside of the circle of NPB members after 1927.<sup>320</sup>

<sup>314</sup> Van Senden had been an editor of *Omhoog* (*Upwards*) between 1914 and 1920, and of *Barchembladen* (*Barchem Papers*) since 1925. See: H. Noordegraaf, 'Senden, Gerhardus Hendericus van', in: Van den Berg et al. (eds.), *BLGNP* IV, 393-397, there 394-395.

<sup>315</sup> A.E.F. Junod, 'Aan alle lezers, vrienden van "De Hervorming"', *De Hervorming* 1924-52 (27 December 1924), 409; M.C. van Mourik Broekman et al., 'Aan onze lezers', *Ibid.* 1924-52 (27 December 1924), 409-410, there 409.

<sup>316</sup> G.H. van Senden, 'Buitenland – Fülöp-Miller over het bolsjewisme', *Ibid.* 1929-05 (4 May 1929), 35-36; G.H. van Senden, 'Buitenland – Rusland', *Ibid.* 1930-06 (13 June 1930), 43-44; G.H. van Senden, 'Ingezonden', *Ibid.* 1932-06 (18 June 1932), 46.

<sup>317</sup> G.H. van Senden, 'Buitenland – Bolsjewisme en fascisme', *Ibid.* 1930-02 (5 February 1930), 14.

<sup>318</sup> G.H. van Senden, 'Buitenland – Duitschland', *Ibid.* 1932-08 (22 September 1932), 59-61, there 59; G.H. van Senden, 'Buitenland – Boeken', *Ibid.* 1933-01 (19 January 1933), 4-6, there 5.

<sup>319</sup> "...dat ik nog eens een ander geluid heb kunnen doen hooren dan men gewoonlijk ten onzent verneemt." Quoted from: G.H. van Senden, 'Buitenland – Terugblik', *Ibid.* 1934-11 (21 December 1934), 82-84, there 83.

<sup>320</sup> After the disappearance of *De Hervorming*, Van Senden's sympathies for Nazism increased, although he never joined the *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging* (National Socialist Movement), the leading fascist party in the Netherlands, or any other fascist-oriented organisation. Nevertheless, due to these sympathies, he became almost totally

## 12. Dutch Modernists and Like-Minded Groups Abroad: An Evaluation

Notwithstanding the influence specific national circumstances had on their development, modernists in the Netherlands and related liberal Protestant groups elsewhere seem to have developed along similar lines. In every country, high expectations accompanied the emergence of groups that wanted to reform church and social life on a theologically ‘modern’ or liberal basis. These groups all felt to be the true heirs to the sixteenth-century Reformers, continuing the latter’s perceived aim of building a new world and bringing it to completion. They all believed that the kind of Christianity to which they gave shape would one day predominate. Yet, nowhere did these expectations come true: liberal Protestants failed to outgrow orthodoxy in church life, build the faith community of tomorrow, exert a lasting attraction on the intellectual and cultural flower of the nation, and to reach the masses. Their numerical growth stalled, and, in those countries in which Protestantism historically had a strong position, their influence on church and social life even gradually diminished. This disappointment over the inability of liberal Protestantism to be the reform movement it wanted to be led some to explore new ways – not only theologically, developing either in a more orthodox or a less Christian direction, but also socially, giving priority to social issues over ecclesial and theological matters, and politically, embracing political socialism and seeking alliance with the socialist labour movement. Means of contact with like-minded groups abroad were therefore cherished. It reminded liberal Protestants to be part of an international movement, to share the lot of others abroad, to struggle with the same issues, and to endure the same hardships as these foreign co-religionists. Moreover, it showed others in their own countries that liberal Protestants were part of an international movement, making it less obvious to regard them as utterly insignificant. Accordingly, it was no coincidence that the international conferences of religious liberals were first held when Unitarians’ influence in Britain and the United States was already waning and when a feeling of marginalisation was growing among the members of the NPB and its foreign sister associations.

The observation that the development of liberal Protestant groups outside of the Netherlands ran parallel to the development of the Dutch modernist movement – indeed, that a similar *pattern* becomes apparent in the history of all groups affiliated to the IARF in the 1930s – suggests that the ultimate marginalisation of the Dutch modernist movement was first of all due to internal factors, to elements intrinsic to liberal Protestantism itself. As analysed above, liberal Protestantism not only had a bourgeois character in the Netherlands, but also abroad.<sup>321</sup> This reinforces the argument made in the introductory chapter, and further explained in the concluding chapter below, that both Dutch modernists’ unfulfilled expectations and the lack of appeal of the Dutch modernist movement should in large part, if not primarily, be attributed to this movement’s bourgeois character and the consequences this had in practice.

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isolated after 1945. See: B. Brandsma and E. Eskens, ‘Filosofen in oorlogstijd – Afrekening: de ongrijpbare schemerfiguur’, *Filosofie Magazine* IV.3 (April 1995), 28-31.

<sup>321</sup> Lecturing about liberal Protestantism worldwide at the 1905 international conference of religious liberals in Geneva, British Unitarian W.G. Tarrant (1853-1928) noticed that liberal Protestants were “mostly middle-class people” everywhere. Quoted from: W.G. Tarrant, ‘The Relations of Liberal Religion to Social Reforms’, in: Montet (ed.), *Actes du III<sup>me</sup> Congrès International du Christianisme Libéral et Progressif*, 190-195, there 190. See also: W.G. Tarrant, ‘De verhouding tusschen vrijzinnigen godsdienst en maatschappelijke hervormingen’, *De Hervorming* 1905-47 (25 November 1905), 369-370, there 369.



Dutch Reformed minister G. Horreüs de Haas (*left*) believed that liberal Protestantism and socialism only had a future in combination. Yet, as recapitulated in the concluding chapter, he and fellow socialist modernists were unable to bridge the gap between the bourgeois modernist movement and socialist working-class individuals.

*Source:* 'De brochure: "Godsdienst en socialisme" van ds. Horreüs de Haas',  
*De Houten Pomp* II.47 (22 August 1924), 5.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

### 1. Recapitulating the History of the Modernist Movement

In November 1930, then editor-in-chief of *De Hervorming* D. Drijver evaluated the history of the *Protestantenbond* on the occasion of the diamond jubilee of this association, which had spanned the full width of the modernist movement almost from its founding onwards. *Almost*, because, as Drijver recalled, “many kingpins of the modernist movement” had initially been hesitant to join the NPB, feeling that its founders overestimated its potential to reform church life. While these modernist kingpins had ultimately aligned themselves with the NPB nonetheless, the subsequent history of the association, Drijver argued, had fully justified their initial sentiment. True, the NPB had contributed to the development of liberal Protestantism in the Netherlands by organising religious services for individuals who might have otherwise abnegated their religion altogether, as well as by establishing Sunday schools, issuing hymn books and tracts, and participating in the framework of the CC. Yet, its sixty-year history proved that its founders’ expectations had been far too high indeed. It had not become the community of faith that would replace the existing churches, and had not even managed to realise changes within these churches: the NPB “has been able to alter neither the disorder in the Dutch Reformed Church, nor the spirit of being a religious *corps d’élite* among Mennonites and Remonstrants, nor Lutherans’ attachment to their own church.” Experiencing that it continued to lack influence in church life, the NPB had in due course decided to increase its efforts to influence social life. However, it had failed to do this as well. In the past decades, Drijver observed, all kinds of social reforms had been carried through, but the NPB could not be credited for these at all. Regarding social issues, the NPB “has restricted itself mainly to uttering moderate ideals and to taking some small activities in hand.” All in all, the NPB “has not made deep inroads on the religious soul of the Dutch.” Drijver did not want to conclude from this that the NPB had no future anymore, but he made perfectly clear that its achievements so far had been few.<sup>1</sup>

By looking back over the development of the NPB since its founding in 1870, Drijver characterised the history of the Dutch modernist movement in a nutshell. The NPB fulfilled the role of “the organisational spider in the modernist web”<sup>2</sup> – a role it gradually lost after the creation of the CC in 1923. Drijver delineated the history of the modernist movement as a story of decline: emerging with much vigour in the 1850s and 1860s, the modernist movement gradually lost appeal and significance afterwards and fell utterly short of first-generation modernists’ expectations. Drijver was neither the first nor the last to put forward this narrative while dealing with the development of the modernist movement. As discussed in the introductory chapter, most studies on the Dutch modernist movement are either entirely descriptive or contain arguments that, in

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<sup>1</sup> “...vele kopstukken der moderne richting...”; “Hij heeft noch de verwarring in de Nederl. Hervormde Kerk, noch de broederschapssfeer van Doopsgezinden en Remonstranten, noch de onderlinge afhankelijkheid der Lutherschen weten te veranderen.”; “Zoo bleef het op sociaal gebied hoofdzakelijk bij het uitspreken van gematigde idealen, naast het ter hand nemen van wat klein werk.”; “Heeft hij ook in de godsdienstige volksziel niet ingegrepen...” Quoted from: D. Drijver, ‘Na zestig jaren’, *De Hervorming* 1930-10 (8 November 1930), 71.

<sup>2</sup> Krijger, ‘De organisatorische spin in het vrijzinnige web’. This proverb is literally translated from Dutch into English – a better translation would be: ‘the linchpin of the modernist movement’. However, the latter translation lacks the metaphorical strength that the Dutch proverb ‘spin in het web’ does have: ‘web’ is a metaphor for ‘network’ and a spider can be found in the centre of its web, the point where all threads of the web come together. All threads of the modernist network came together in the NPB, which hence stood at the centre of this network.

my view, cannot sufficiently explain why the rapid, short-lived rise of the modernist movement was followed by a gradual fall. As I see it, an explanation should first and foremost be sought in what was intrinsic to the modernist movement itself.

## **2. Interpreting Modernist History: The Significance of the NPB and *De Hervorming***

In 1858, Dutch Reformed minister D.Th. Huet was probably the first to refer to a current that was emerging within Protestantism at that time as ‘modernism’. Also known as ‘liberal Protestantism’, particularly outside of the Netherlands, modernism was, and continued to be, interdenominational and diffuse, covering various conceptions of God and religious images. Nonetheless, those identifying as ‘modernists’ did have some features in common that distinguished them from other Protestants. Initially, in its ‘classic’ form that came to be known as ‘old-school modernism’ in the twentieth century, modernism was characterised by a historical-critical approach to the Bible, an anti-supernaturalist interpretation of Christianity, an image of Jesus as a paragon of virtue, an optimistic outlook on human nature, a firm belief in progress, the endeavour to let individuals develop personal conceptions of God in accordance with reason and their inner life, and the hope that mankind would one day share in a universal kind of non-dogmatic religiosity. Although liberal Protestant historians, most famously Johannes Lindeboom, have been keen to trace its roots all the way back to the Renaissance or, in an extreme case, even to Antiquity, modernism was essentially a product of both the rationalistic scholarly culture that came into being during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment and the subjectivism of early nineteenth-century Romanticism. It was ultimately ‘born’ at the theological faculty in the German town of Tübingen in the 1830s. As said, ‘modernism’ is an umbrella term including both modern theology, the development of which started in the Netherlands in the 1840s, and the modernist movement, which took shape as of the late 1850s. The latter tried to reconfigure church and social life on the basis of the non-supernatural, non-dogmatic interpretation of Christianity that modern theology put forward. Its rise resulted in a fierce orthodox backlash. To be able to defend modernist interests against this counteroffensive of ‘confessionalism’, the NPB was founded in 1870. This association also intended to tighten the bonds among modernists from different denominations, and, as some of its supporters hoped, give shape to a new kind of faith community that would replace the institution of the church.

As said in the introductory chapter, the NPB was an archetype of a new kind of association that emerged in the late nineteenth century: it was a national league of local branches, founded to gain the support of individuals with a shared interest, or shared persuasion, from all across the country in order to realise a particular goal. In the case of the NPB, this goal was to advance the free development of religious life in church and society. The NPB externalised an ‘imagined community’, being based not on actual personal encounters, but rather on its members’ feeling to be part of a group of like-minded people, of whom they would only come to know a few. In shaping this imagined community, the weekly *De Hervorming* was instrumental. Issued as the ‘*Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*’ between 1869 and 1872, this magazine was affiliated to the NPB from late 1875 until its disappearance in late 1934. In order to feel part of a community that primarily rests on the power of imagination, individuals need to have a shared frame of reference in which their sense of togetherness is rooted, and from which they can derive their identity. In other words, their aptitude to experience and cultivate their bonds, their sociability, has to be fostered. This was exactly what *De Hervorming* did. It was modernists’ collective weapon against

a common enemy: confessionalism. The name '*De Hervorming*' in itself was intended to instil upon modernists the feeling to have a shared past: it referred to the sixteenth-century Reformers, upon whom characteristics were projected in which modernists could recognise themselves. *De Hervorming* helped to build a modernist 'collective memory' and to shape modernist 'invented traditions', which it did in several ways. It contained articles in which Luther and Zwingli were commemorated as advocates of principles labelled 'modernist', in particular the freedom of conscience, and in which a liberal Protestant spirit was described in pre-modern 'great minds', some of whom had not even been Christian. The magazine extensively reported on the annual meeting of modern theologians held in Amsterdam around Easter, and the general NPB assembly held in a different city each year around Reformation Day, as such turning these events into mainstays and highlights of modernist community life. Moreover, initiatives that contributed to provide modernists with their own 'material culture', such as modernist hymnbooks and a modernist translation of the Bible (the *Leidsche Vertaling*), often resulted from discussions started in *De Hervorming*. In sum, *De Hervorming* helped to construct a modernist 'cultural pattern', offering building blocks that each modernist could use in shaping an identity that was recognisable as 'modernist'.<sup>3</sup>

The title of the magazine not only was a reference to a shared past, but also reminded modernists of a shared goal to pursue in the present: reshaping Christianity in such a way that it would be sustainable in the age to come, and permeating society with this 'modernised' Christianity – or to quote A. Bruining, bringing about “a second Reformation, not less far-reaching than that of the sixteenth century.”<sup>4</sup> In the columns of *De Hervorming*, a modernist could read that elsewhere in the Netherlands (and abroad) in past and present, others had been or were fighting for the same cause as he was. Through *De Hervorming*, all modernists shared in each other's fortunes. Finally, *De Hervorming* showed modernists that, notwithstanding their political, denominational and theological differences, they had a shared future, symbolised by the NPB. Next to reinforcing a sense of belonging, the magazine fostered among modernists a sense of urgency to put the 'second Reformation' mentioned above into shape. Many initiatives to do so accordingly stemmed from discussions held in *De Hervorming*, such as attempts to organise district nursing within the frame of the NPB (intended to enhance the spiritual development of the sick poor) in the 1890s, the founding of the *Evangelische Unie* (intended to advance doctrinal freedom within the Dutch Reformed Church) in 1896, and the endeavour to permeate political life with a modernist spirit (particularly intended to counteract a perceived religious indifference within liberal parties) in the 1910s and 1920s. *De Hervorming* was hence not only a 'mirror' in which the development of the modernist movement was reflected; it was an important *agent* in this development as well.

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<sup>3</sup> As argued by the authors mentioned in note 78 on p. 22 of this study, a neo-Calvinist cultural pattern was shaped around *De Standaard*, the Anti-Revolutionary Party, the Free University in Amsterdam, and the Reformed Churches. This is not to say to every single neo-Calvinist had a subscription to *De Standaard*, was a member of the Anti-Revolutionary Party, or had studied at the Free University, but these institutions were crucial identity markers and identity builders in neo-Calvinist circles. By analogy with this, it can be stated that *De Hervorming* had a similar function in shaping a modernist cultural pattern; it was a constitutive element in the ideal type of a recognisable modernist 'way of being'. From an early twenty-first-century perspective, it can be said that *De Hervorming* has become a modernist '*lieu de mémoire*' or 'place of memory' in itself – that is, an important component of identity in the Dutch liberal Protestant memory culture.

<sup>4</sup> “...een tweede Hervorming, niet minder ingrijpend dan die der 16<sup>de</sup> eeuw.” Quoted from: [A. Bruining in:] H.U. Meyboom, ‘Rede van prof. H.U. Meyboom, gehouden te Leeuwarden 23 Oct. ’12’, *De Hervorming* 1912-44 (2 November 1912), 353-355, there 353.



Although the NPB thus helped to shape a ‘typically modernist’ cultural pattern, and could rightfully claim to be the central organisation within the modernist movement until well into the early twentieth century, its number of members was smaller than the total number of Dutchmen and Dutchwomen who identified as ‘modernists’. In other words, the modernist movement and the imagined community that was the NPB did not coincide. Nonetheless, the NPB is *the* point of departure for research intended to cover the full width of the Dutch modernist movement before the Second World War, namely in its capacity as the association that commissioned the publishing of *De Hervorming*. As implied in the concept of the ‘discourse community’, a movement with rather fluid boundaries such as the modernist one can only be studied by looking at the channels of communication of which those who identified as adherents to this movement made use to express themselves. *De Hervorming* arguably was the main channel of communication in liberal Protestant circles, particularly after it was purchased by the NPB in 1875: because all (political, denominational, theological) nuances existing within the modernist movement were represented in the membership of the NPB, and all modernist opinion leaders were involved with the NPB in one way or another, the variety of opinions circulating within the modernist movement manifested themselves in the opinion magazine affiliated to the NPB.<sup>5</sup> In fact, modernists had the opportunity to develop into opinion leaders in their own circles in the first place by expressing themselves in this periodical. After all, no other modernist magazine had as much reach and was as old as *De Hervorming*, due to which the prestige of the latter was unequalled. Ideas had potentially the most impact in the modernist movement when they were put forward in *De Hervorming*. Therefore, an integral and systematic discourse analysis of the content of this magazine is at the core of the research into the liberal Protestant press at large (and many other sources) upon which this study is based.

By approaching the modernist movement as a discourse community (and being the first to do so), this study advances the following twofold argument to explain the development of this movement, as sketched in Drijver’s abovementioned 1930 article. First, the modernist movement was, in practice, not as dedicated to reform as first-generation modernists’ rhetoric suggested. Second, the modernist movement had an inherently bourgeois character, fostering a strong sense of class-consciousness and finding expression in a particular discourse, both of which caused modernists to become out of step with what was going on in society at large.

### 3. Evaluating the History of the Modernist Movement

Due to the absence of doctrines and concrete conceptions of God with which they all could identify, first-generation modernists identified themselves in terms of what they were not and what they wanted to be. They contrasted themselves with orthodoxy, or, to be more precise, with their perception of what ‘orthodoxy’ was: supernaturalist, obscurantist, reactionary, hostile towards the freedom of conscience, and imperious. They believed that they were the true Protestants, the true heirs to the Reformation – a vanguard that would reform church life and social life and as such heralded the future. The first-generation modernists’ self-image was thus based on a negation of orthodoxy, and on the expectations that these modernists had. When those expectations had still not come true after several decades, and a new generation of modernists,

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<sup>5</sup> Towards the general public, it accordingly fulfilled the role of ‘display window’: if one wanted to gain a clear and representative impression of what was going on in modernist circles, *De Hervorming* was the periodical to read.

manifesting itself as of the mid-1890s, began to question the casualness with which modernism was contrasted with orthodoxy and to blame the earliest modernists for merely dismantling church life without actually building something new in its place, a severe identity crisis set in among modernists. In fact, the desirability to define ‘modernism’ positively – that is, in terms of what it was rather than in terms of what it was not or what it wanted to be – was as old as the modernist movement itself.<sup>6</sup> However, as long as all modernists could at least agree to be the exact opposite of orthodox Protestants and collectively believe that the future was theirs, it was not problematic for the modernist movement to lack a clear profile. From the mid-1890s onwards, it was precisely this consensus that disappeared. ‘Mystical youngsters’, ‘malcontents’ and ‘right-wing modernists’ felt that modernists had so far been too individualistic, too intellectualistic and too unappreciative of the Christian tradition. Though not rejecting the term ‘modernist’ altogether, they tended to prefer the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’, which lacked the negative connotations that ‘*modern*’ had for them. Two other groups followed them in this: the *vrijzinnig-hervormden*, for whom ‘*modern*’ connoted an indifferent or even antagonistic attitude in ecclesial matters, and the *algemeen-vrijzinnigen*, who hoped to erase existing factional lines. The increasing use of the term ‘*vrijzinnig*’ at the expense of the term ‘*modern*’ seemed to promise new horizons for the modernist movement, but it actually denoted something else. By using the term ‘*modern*’ in reference to themselves less and less, modernists in the twentieth century gave up the expectations and pretensions for which this term stood. Instead of being more earnest in the pursuit for a new religious vocabulary and a second Reformation, the crisis of identity and the corresponding need for more clarity about the essence of liberal Protestantism led modernists to fall back on ‘orthodox’ terminology and even on creed-like ‘declarations of faith’.

In the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s, voices criticising church life and the institution of the church prevailed in the modernist movement. The church was said to have had its day – it was rooted in a supernaturalist world view and had become too detached from the rest of society, lagging behind the times. If Christianity was to preserve its social significance in the age to come, church life either had to be replaced by a differently shaped community of faith or purged of all elements that only made sense in a supernaturalist outlook on life. Some hoped that the NPB would develop into the faith community of tomorrow, uniting all modernists and ultimately, when orthodoxy had ‘died out’, becoming the organisation in which Christianity would find its new institutional embodiment. However, not everyone in the NPB cherished this hope: in practice, most modernists wanted to use the NPB as an *addition* to church life, as a place of refuge for modernists who were chased out of their church congregations, and as a meeting place for modernists from different denominational backgrounds. These two opposing visions of what the NPB was and what it should be hindered the NPB from being an experimental garden. In fact, many NPB branches gradually came to resemble church congregations, even offering its members baptismal services and the opportunity to celebrate the Lord’s Supper. A more drastic attempt to shape a new kind of faith community was the founding of the Free Congregation in Amsterdam in 1877. Seceding from the local Dutch Reformed congregation, the Hugenholtz brothers and their sympathisers formed an independent community with the status of a voluntary association. They decided to abolish baptism, the Lord’s Supper, several Christian holidays and the institution of the diaconry, and to

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<sup>6</sup> The identity of the NPB has been under discussion from its founding onwards. See: Krijger, ‘De Nederlandse Protestantenbond: zelfportretten door de jaren heen’.

organise religious services in which the Bible was not the only source of edification. In practice, the Free Congregation was a ‘church-lite’, yet no radically new alternative to church life. Its founding was not copied elsewhere in the Netherlands, leading to disappointment among those who felt that the institution of the church had served its turn.

The outbreak of the so-called ‘*Doleantie*’ in 1886, the Kuyperian exodus from the Dutch Reformed Church, gave these modernists a new gleam of hope that the existing church life would finally fall apart, but the grand majority of modernists were shown not to be willing to contribute to that. Church-minded voices now became dominant in the modernist movement. In liberal Reformed circles, a strong feeling became manifest that modernists would have had a stronger position in the Dutch Reformed Church if dissatisfied modernist members of this denomination had not joined the Remonstrant Brotherhood or had not sought refuge in the NPB. The ideal of the *volkskerk* came to be stressed, which was not conducive to thorough church reform: for this ideal to be realised, the bonds with orthodoxy had to be maintained. In reaction to Reformed modernists’ greater emphasis on their own denomination, Remonstrants, Mennonites and Lutherans came to focus more on their own denominations as well.<sup>7</sup> This increased denominational consciousness, combined with malcontent criticism of the lack of community spirit in old-school modernism, led to a revaluation of the institution of the church and ecclesial practices, for which the term ‘ecclesial turn’ has been coined in this study. It meant the deathblow to the quest for alternatives to church life and to the aspiration of the NPB to unite all modernists.<sup>8</sup>

While reflecting upon their own identity and a reform of church life, modernists were not only confronted with orthodoxy. They also had to deal with the emergence of what were called ‘little religions’ and life reform movements, as well as with growing numbers of people leaving the churches and the spread of atheism. Some modernists were shown to be attracted to little religions such as Theosophy and Spiritism. They claimed that these faiths could give what modernism lacked, in particular certainty about the afterlife and a thorough integration of science and religion. Moreover, in the 1910s and 1920s, when a feeling of marginalisation had become manifest among modernists, some put forward that the modernist movement should try to incorporate the little religions, in order for it to exert more influence on religious life outside of the churches and to speak with a louder voice in society. Yet, an attempt to maintain a federation of groups organised around the concept of ‘free religiosity’ was no success. In modernist circles, enthusiasm for a close alliance with the adherents of little religions was too small. The feeling that occultist spirituality did not contribute to the free development of religious life proved to be too strong among modernists: the little religions were generally perceived to be supernaturalist, doctrinal, materialistic, pseudoscientific, and hence inferior to liberal Protestantism. They should

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<sup>7</sup> Particularly in the Remonstrant Brotherhood, denominational self-awareness also increased due to the influx of hundreds of dissatisfied Dutch Reformed modernists in the late nineteenth century. This influx nourished the feeling that it was both justified and necessary for the Remonstrant Brotherhood to exist as a separate denomination.

<sup>8</sup> Because the NPB more and more came to resemble denominational church life, modernist church groups were no longer willing to grant it a central position in the modernist movement. A clear indication thereof is the fact that not the NPB, but new organisations – the Free Religious Federation and the CC – came to embody the pursuit of more unity among liberal Protestants as of the late 1910s. See: J.J. Meyer, ‘In den stroom – Na de jaarvergadering van den Protestantenvond’, *De Stroom* IV.48 (7 November 1925), 2-3, there 3.

be kept at a distance instead of closely tied to the modernist movement.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, due to the ‘ecclesial turn’ mentioned above, there was a strong tendency in the early twentieth-century modernist movement to equate religious life with church life. Manifestations of belief in a ‘higher’ reality, such as the little religions, falling outside of church life were consequently treated as problematic. Rather than helping religious life to blossom in a non-church setting, a reinforcement of church life came to have priority in the modernist movement: people who had resigned their church membership or who never attended religious services should be led *back* to the churches.<sup>10</sup> As such, the issue of church abandonment was not fathomed deeply enough in modernist circles: after all, by implying that religious life needed an ecclesial embedding, the question of why a growing number of people left the churches in the first place basically came to be declared irrelevant.<sup>11</sup> Because the institution of the church and ecclesial practices received more appreciation in modernist circles, even causing the NPB to become a church-like denomination, others’ dissatisfaction with church life was not recognised.

As comes to the fore in my analysis of the discussions on ecclesial and religious matters mentioned above and those on social issues dealt with below, there was a dominant discourse in modernist circles. I call it the ‘discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors’. The discussion on lay preaching, which was part of the larger debate on church reform, and the discussion on district nursing, one element of the debate on social reform, may illustrate what I mean. It was often claimed that the distinction between ‘clergymen’ and ‘laypeople’ had become irrelevant in the modernist movement. However, this distinction did indeed continue to exist. Pleas to grant laypeople the right to lead religious services had a limited effect. Modernists agreed that for a sermon to be truly edifying, the person who preaches should have ideas about God that are concordant with contemporary science and scholarship, put free piety into practice, and show a strong moral sense. Having completed a theological study and having received an ordination were seen as safeguards that someone had the capacities and qualities, that someone was spiritually developed enough, to be an example to his audience.

As with every form of social work, district nursing should help the poor and needy to struggle out of their misery. Modernists generally believed that the roots of social wrongs were of a spiritual nature: these wrongs stemmed from a lack of the necessary capacities for self-improvement and self-sustainment in those suffering from social misery, as well as from a poorly developed sense of duty and of a lack of qualms of conscience in those who were in a position to lend support. The solutions to social wrongs were accordingly of a spiritual nature as well: material relief could only be realised through spiritual development. In modernist thinking, an implicit link was made between a low level of spiritual development and a low position on the social ladder. The key to increasing one’s level of spiritual development was bringing this

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<sup>9</sup> The discussion around the little religions should be read against the background of the ongoing debate surrounding the identity of the modernist movement and the related questions of how this movement should be demarcated and who belonged to it.

<sup>10</sup> As F. Dijkema argued in 1929, leaving the churches often meant abandoning Christianity. Hence, he implied, to preserve Christianity as a vital force in life, churchless individuals should be led back to the churches. See: F. Dijkema, ‘De groote stad – Een afscheid’, *Amsterdamsch Bijblad van De Stroom* VIII.21 (27 April 1929), 1.

<sup>11</sup> Hoenderdaal notices this lack of genuine reflection upon atheism and the growth in the number of individuals without church membership as well; he concludes that modernists too easily assumed to be able to bridge the deepening gap between church life and secular culture. See: Hoenderdaal, ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen’, 250.

individual into contact with someone who was spiritually more developed, hence with someone from a higher social class. In the contact between the two, it was expected that the former would gradually appropriate the attitude of mind of the former. Social work organised on the basis of this principle, including district nursing, was called '*toynbeewerk*' and was favoured in modernist circles because of its presumed twofold effect.<sup>12</sup> It helped the poor and needy to gain insight into the causes of their misery, to develop a stronger moral sense, and – due to the links made in modernist thinking between intellectual development, piety and morality – to instil them with a spirit of 'free piety'. Furthermore, '*toynbeewerk*' increased social awareness among bourgeois individuals, as it encouraged the latter to assume *individual* responsibility for the commonweal and, by confronting them directly with social misery, led them to acknowledge the intolerability of social wrongs.

In sum, activities in both church life and social life ought to contribute to character building, to help individuals take in hand their self-realisation in an intellectual, religious and moral sense. This did not mean that individuals were mere 'atoms'; spiritual development implied knowing and being able to fulfil one's duties to community. Through contact with the spiritually most developed individuals, 'spiritual aristocrats', whom they could take as an example, who could act as their 'tutors', spiritually less developed individuals were enabled to pursue self-realisation. In the case of lay preaching, access to the pulpit remained the prerogative of ministers, who were, so to speak, 'spiritual aristocrats' by profession and hence most fit to address a congregation. In the case of district nursing, women in particular could fulfil the role of spiritual 'tutors', because this form of social work required qualities that were believed to be intrinsic to the female nature. Yet, in both cases, *modernists* could best fulfil the role of a 'spiritual aristocracy of tutors': intellectually and hence religiously and hence morally, they were, in their own perception, spiritually the most developed.

As expressed in modernist discourse, the way to permeate society with a liberal Protestant spirit was through *personal* contact between a 'spiritual aristocrat' and a spiritually less developed individual. It was expected that the 'good' influence of the former would in due course not leave the latter unaffected. Centralising welfare work within the framework of the national NPB was therefore controversial. It was feared that such work would then be easily deprived of its individual character and would easily become a matter of propaganda for modernism instead of an altruistic act of humanity to help the less fortunate. Moreover, organising welfare work collectively could not only discourage NPB members from taking *individual* responsibility for social reform; it would also make the entire membership of the NPB morally responsible for specific *forms* of welfare work, including those members who did not agree with the chosen forms. Out of fear that the NPB might otherwise disintegrate, it was decided after much debate in the late nineteenth century that modernists should only continue to be *encouraged* to engage in welfare work; it was up to every NPB member individually to decide how he wanted to contribute to the commonweal. The instigation of some modernists to shift the focus of the NPB from church life to social life was thereby ignored. These modernists believed that without such a shift of focus, the modernist movement would never be able to get a foothold in the working classes, on which the emerging socialist labour movement exerted a growing attraction.

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<sup>12</sup> Nijenhuis states that *toynbeewerk* was primarily a modernist endeavour. See: Nijenhuis, *Werk in de schaduw*, 15.

In this labour movement, which contradicted modernist discourse by proclaiming that structural reforms in society should precede individual reform and hence that bourgeois society needed to disappear, an unfavourable outlook on religion in general and modernism in particular prevailed. Its first leader – who could, due to the almost religious awe that he inspired in his working-class sympathisers, better be called a ‘messiah’ – was a former modernist minister: F. Domela Nieuwenhuis. One of the reasons for him to resign and even to renounce his faith altogether, in 1879, was the lack of urgency to reform society that he perceived in modernist circles. Domela depicted the modernist movement as half-hearted, wallowing in moral superiority, self-satisfied – as inherently bourgeois and thus as inimical to socialism. Later socialist leaders did not correct the image of modernists that he firmly embedded in the labour movement. In the modernist movement, in turn, socialism initially got a bad press: it was generally seen as vulgar, materialistic, and an attack on individual freedom. The idea of being politically liberal ‘by nature’ was deep-rooted in modernists’ self-perception; liberal politics came closest to modernist discourse. Yet, in the late 1880s, articles began to appear in the modernist press in which socialism received a positive connotation, first in a general ‘cultural’ sense, in restraint of unbridled individual-centredness, later also in a more political sense. Some modernist ministers even became engaged in socialist politics, either within or outside the SDAP, the largest socialist party in the Netherlands, as of the mid-1890s. Confronted with the side effects of liberal-capitalist economics in the municipalities that they inhabited, they looked beyond socialist leaders’ anti-religious, inflammatory rhetoric, and believed that the labour movement and the modernist movement belonged together: in essence, both wanted to liberate the individual from the chains in which he was bound. Nonetheless, their numbers remained small; a political preference for liberalism continued to prevail among modernists.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, socialist modernist ministers did not succeed in giving the modernist movement more appeal to the working classes. On the contrary, instead of leading labourers into the modernist movement, ‘red ministers’ became a separate faction within both socialism and the modernist movement.

The modernist movement not only failed to make headway among the working classes. As early as the 1860s, leading Dutch men of letters and publicists, who had looked favourably upon or had even actively participated in the modernist movement during the very beginning of its formative phase, severely criticised modernists for their inability to make their religious ideas less vague, their half-hearted attempts to harmonise biblical narratives with contemporary scientific and scholarly insights, and their failure to live up to their own expectations. Just as former modernist minister Domela Nieuwenhuis, due to whom an unfavourable outlook on the modernist movement firmly took root in the socialist movement, Pierson and Busken Huet, who identified as modernists before resigning as ministers in the mid-1860s, fostered a negative image of the modernist movement in the literary circles into which they entered after stepping down from the pulpit. Their influence should not be underestimated: being former modernists themselves, their negative opinion of the modernist movement was attributed a great deal of authority. In addition, modernist discourse *widened* the gap between the modernist movement and intellectual life. In the modernist movement, literature was generally only appreciated if it contributed to spiritual development. The criteria on which modernists ultimately determined

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<sup>13</sup> As Hoenderdaal writes, engagement in socialist politics continued to be an affair of modernist *ministers*, not of laypeople. See: ‘Het vrijzinnig protestantisme tussen de schaduwen van gisteren en morgen’, 219.

the value of a written work were the intentions of its author and the protagonists it presented: it should bear the marks of what modernists regarded as reasonable, pious and decent. In modernist eyes, the author and the protagonists of a novel should be, but often failed to be, 'spiritual aristocrats'. Truth, ethics and aesthetics were inextricably interwoven in modernist thinking. Trends in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature and art that accentuated one of these elements at the expense of the other two, or that utterly neglected one or all of these elements, such as naturalism, the notion of *l'art pour l'art* that came into vogue, aestheticism, a growing interest in occultism, nihilism, escapism, and fatalism, were therefore observed with concern in the modernist movement. Among modernists, a frame of mind continued to be dominant that did not allow for literature to be appreciated other than through the eyes of a minister. Not surprisingly, most modernist literary critics were ministers. A novel was no sermon, but it should essentially have the same effect as a sermon: it should be edifying. It was exactly this moralism, as well as the moral hypocrisy, languidness, parochialism and class structure that they regarded as characteristic of bourgeois society, against which belletrists made a stand. The norms, values and ideals upheld in the modernist movement, pre-eminently reflected in modernists' literary criticism, were those of the bourgeois world rejected in literary circles.

Although the eagerness with which they made themselves heard in the early twentieth century might suggest the opposite, modernists with politically socialist leanings remained a rather small minority. Yet, among those modernists who continued to support liberal politics, dissatisfaction with political liberalism increased. They blamed liberal politicians for neglecting religion as a cause for concern in social life due to an interpretation of the term 'neutrality' that was, in their view, basically tantamount to religious indifference. In doing so, liberal politicians played into the hands of Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants: they gave the latter reason to claim that liberalism aspired after a society in which religion was irrelevant, and as such gave them an incentive to go on the offensive. Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants organised themselves separately in all spheres of life, and managed to increase their influence in society. Political liberals just stood there and watched, while confessionalsists' expansion of power was at the expense of the free development of religious life that the modernists who loyally supported them pursued. Initiatives were therefore taken to propagate liberal Protestant interests and principles more actively in political life in general and liberal political parties in particular. Similar initiatives were taken in social life. Fuelled by the rise of malcontentism, due to which the Christian roots of the modernist movement came to be accentuated, discontent with the 'general', non-Christian, or not explicitly Christian associations that they had supported so far grew among modernists. The notion of neutrality on which those associations were based was interpreted in the same way as in political liberalism. While Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants had been able to spread their principles in society through organisations of their own, modernists had satisfied themselves with organisations in which, as was argued in a growing number of opinion articles, their principles – whatever these might be – could not be done full justice. Accordingly, initiatives such as the founding of a secondary school, an association in aid of neglected children, youth organisations and a radio broadcasting corporation exclusively affiliated to the modernist movement were launched.

Not all of these initiatives had the same amount of success. Separate political organisations of modernists, and calls to only vote for liberal candidates who explicitly identified as modernists,

did not arouse much enthusiasm: the feeling prevailed that they blended religion and politics in the same way as confessionality did, by turning shared theological views into the prime motive behind political behaviour. The founding of a modernist high school in The Hague was not followed elsewhere in the Netherlands: the ideal of one public school for all Dutch children, regardless of their religious backgrounds, was too strong in modernist circles, while schools of their own would deprive modernists of the possibility to instil non-modernist children with a liberal Protestant spirit. The Association for the Support of the Uncared-For and Fallen Women failed to make clear which consequences its liberal Protestant basis should have in practice, as a result of which it received less support than it had hoped for. On the other hand, separate youth organisations immediately attained a firm foothold: they were welcomed as a means to prepare new generations of modernists for the ongoing spiritual battle with confessionality and materialism, and to breathe new life into the modernist movement. The same was true of the VPRO: modernists, including the initiators and leaders of the VPRO, generally favoured a national broadcasting association in which all religious groups in the Netherlands would have a say, but as long as such an association did not come into being – the claim of the AVRO to be truly ‘national’ was rejected –, they had to maintain a broadcasting association of their own in order not to be silenced on the radio. All of these initiatives were taken in reaction to and even in imitation of orthodoxy: although the compartmentalisation of society along ideological lines after which confessionality aspired was not a modernist ideal, the forces behind these initiatives felt that modernists had no other choice but to follow orthodoxy’s example, and to go along with the process of pillarisation in order to be heard.<sup>14</sup>

As said, one of the aims of the modernist movement was to permeate society with a modernised Christianity. Different answers were given to the question of how this aim should be and could best be achieved. In addition, the question of whether this aim should exceed the borders of the Netherlands, or, to be more specific, whether the modernist movement had a task in disseminating liberal Protestant principles in non-Christian cultures, hence in conducting foreign mission, was regularly raised. From its emergence onwards, Christianity had been a missionary religion, inciting its adherents to spread the Gospel message all across the world in the hope that others would accept Jesus as their Redeemer. Yet, the image of Jesus as saviour of souls was rejected in modernist circles. Did it still make sense for modernists to engage in foreign mission, then? Moreover, the modernist movement aspired after a *free* development of religious life. Would introducing liberal Protestantism to ‘pagans’ not be an extraneous interference in the free development of their religious life? In the modernist press and in several brochures, a minority zealously maintained that modernists had a calling to concern themselves with foreign mission. These modernists argued that religious life in ‘pagan’ cultures could never freely develop so long as ‘pagans’ were bound in the chains of superstition and savagery. According to them, only modernists could bring spiritual liberation: while Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant

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<sup>14</sup> Exemplary in this respect is the response W. Mackenzie gave to a liberal Protestant who questioned whether organisations such as the VPRO had a right to exist. According to Mackenzie, they had indeed, because the historical development of Dutch society had ‘forced’ liberal Protestants to organise themselves separately. Neither sectarianism nor power was what liberal Protestants aspired after. Yet, without organisations of their own, they would be silenced. Moreover, the ‘general’ associations that liberal Protestants preferred either interpreted their ‘neutral’ basis in such a way that it was tantamount to religious indifference, or were in practice not religiously tolerant at all. See: W. Mackenzie, ‘Wat aan de orde is – De federatieve gedachte’, *Amsterdamsch Bijblad van De Stroom* VIII.10 (9 February 1929), 1. See also: W. Mackenzie, ‘Wat aan de orde is – De V.P.R.O. te Amsterdam’, *Ibid.* VIII.19 (13 April 1929), 1.



missionaries merely tried to replace the bonds of superstition and savagery with other bonds, namely those of dogmatism and ritualism, modernists wanted to help individuals in becoming autonomous, self-conscious beings, to assist individuals in attaining a higher level of spiritual development. Everything came down to the personality of the missionary: as a missionary ought to be a 'spiritual aristocrat' in order for his contact with 'pagans' to result in a *true* and *total* – intellectual, religious *and* moral – improvement in the latter's lot, he should of necessity be a modernist. Pro-mission modernists simply carried further the discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors and applied it to the non-Christian world. Equating Christianity with civilisation, as was common at the time, they emphasised that modernists had a moral duty to help 'pagans' climb the ladder of civilisation by 'Christianising' their cultures. Moreover, pro-mission modernists thought that involvement in foreign mission would have a positive effect on the development of the modernist movement itself as well, as missionary activities would force modernists to phrase their religious beliefs in less 'vague' terms, and was necessary to prevent 'pagans' from becoming bound in Catholic and orthodox Protestant chains.

Their pleas failed to excite much enthusiasm, notwithstanding a latent belief in the modernist movement that the free development of religious life would ultimately lead to a universal religion, and that this universal religion could only be based on liberal Protestant principles. It would have been obvious that modernists were eager to support activities intended to spread their principles in non-Christian cultures also, but most of them showed a lack of interest in foreign mission. This had to do with the fact that the discussion on foreign mission had mostly to do with modernists' involvement in the *Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap*. In the modernist movement, there were two major objections against this missionary society. First, in the NZG, a 'traditional', orthodox view on mission, focused on making converts, prevailed. Second, the NZG was mainly active in the Dutch East Indies, an area in which indigenous religious life had not yet developed far enough to contain elements to which modernists could link up. Most modernists apparently considered foreign mission in this area to be too much of an infringement on the free development of religious life, feeling both that the religious life of 'pagans' should develop on its own, and that the longing for principles similar to those of liberal Protestantism should surge within 'pagans' themselves. The lack of interest in foreign mission reflects the lack of militancy in the modernist movement in general.

Through the NPB, the Dutch modernist movement maintained contact with liberal Protestant groups outside of the Netherlands, some of which were, just as the NPB itself, modelled on the German *Protestantenverein*. These groups sent representatives to each other's annual meetings, a practice that came to be replaced by the international conferences held from 1901 onwards, and were kept informed about each other's ups and downs in the opinion magazines affiliated to them. With the exception of the years coinciding with and immediately following the First World War, when international relations were strained, these groups demonstrated that they felt part of a transnational movement with a shared goal: the eradication of all impediments to a free development of religious life. They formalised their ties by establishing a permanent organisation, the IARF, in 1930, the headquarters of which were located in the Dutch town of Utrecht.<sup>15</sup> The contexts in which other liberal Protestants groups were embedded differed, often significantly,

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<sup>15</sup> As said in chapter 11, the name 'International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom' was adopted only as late as 1932.

from the Dutch one. The extent to which governments interfered in church life, to which societies were institutionally compartmentalised along religious, ethnic, cultural and political lines, and to which liberal Protestants themselves were organised, varied from country to country.

Notwithstanding the particularities of each national context, the development of liberal Protestant groups outside of the Netherlands resembles that of the Dutch modernist movement in general terms, at least until 1940. Everywhere, the emergence of liberal Protestant groups was accompanied by high expectations regarding the appeal and reformist power of liberal Protestantism. Yet nowhere did these expectations come true: liberal Protestantism did not become mainstream in church and society, and turned out not to be a large source of reform, causing liberal Protestant groups to reconsider their identity and goals – which resulted, among other things, in calls for ‘declarations of faith’ to make liberal Protestantism ideologically less vague, and in a less depreciatory outlook on orthodoxy and practices associated with orthodoxy in the early twentieth century. They also became permeated with a spirit of disappointment, frustration or even defeatism. Elsewhere, liberal Protestant groups continued to rely on the bourgeois classes for support just as heavily as in the Netherlands: they failed to get a firm foothold on the lower classes, which the factions of political socialists emerging within all of them could not alter, and they did not manage to exert a lasting influence on intellectual and cultural life. Everywhere, the history of liberal Protestantism has been a story of a lack of appeal outside of the bourgeoisie and a story of gradual marginalisation. This supports my thesis that the Dutch modernist movement lost a good deal of its significance first and foremost due to intrinsic reasons rather than external causes.

#### **4. The Modernist Paradox**

As becomes clear from the analysis above, the history of the modernist movement reads as a paradox. The modernist movement wanted to make sure that Christianity kept up with the times and to permeate society with the spirit of a Christianity stripped of outmoded points of view, in order to prevent Christianity and culture from drifting further and further apart – or, to put it briefly, it tried to relate Christianity to the processes labelled as ‘modernisation’ in the introductory chapter –, but it actually struggled with modernisation. Modernists believed that the future was theirs – after all, contrary to Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants, whom they regarded as the upholders of an archaic Christianity that would in due course no longer be tenable, they were the ones pursuing a synthesis of Christianity and modern times. Yet, as time went on, it turned out that the modernist movement had already experienced its heyday during its formative phase in the 1860s and had been going downhill ever since. In contrast, Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant influence in religious, social and political life had become remarkably bigger from the late 1860s onwards. Paradoxically, the self-proclaimed heralds of a modernised Christianity became marginalised in a modernising society. Why was that so?

As I see it, the modernist movement struggled with ‘modernisation’ precisely because of first-generation modernists’ expectation that the future was theirs. They were convinced that liberal Christianity would sooner or later become the new mainstream, both in church and society, as they believed it was the only outlook on life fit for modern man. Supernaturalist, doctrinal, tradition-bound Christianity would eventually taste defeat or even ‘die out’, so they expected, as it only made sense in a world view that modern science and scholarship had disproved, and

within a social order based on collectivism instead of individualism. To modernist eyes, Roman Catholicism and orthodox Protestantism revolved around the ideal of having everyone adhere to the same creeds; they did not grant individuals the freedom to develop personal conceptions of God. Modernists generally considered the little religions as too eccentric and supernaturalistic to be taken very seriously. Moreover, they thought that freethinking and atheism would never gain much appeal and should accordingly not be attributed too much significance, as man was believed to have an innate yearning for communion with God. Liberal Christianity, on the other hand, satisfied both the mind and the heart: it did not conflict with reason and stimulated individuals to develop conceptions of God in accordance with their inner lives.

First-generation modernists thus firmly believed that the world surrounding them would ultimately adapt to them. Therefore, the modernist movement essentially aimed at turning others into modernists – not in the sense that others should develop conceptions of God based on modern theology, but rather in the sense that others should be helped to internalise the same values, principles and ideals as modernists. The discourse of the spiritual aristocracy of tutors clearly shows this. Individuals with a high level of spiritual development, being those individuals whose intellect, piety and moral sense made them stand out, had the moral duty to assist spiritually less developed individuals in reaching a higher level of spiritual development. In practice, this discourse had two implications.

First, modernists saw reason, piety and morality as closely connected. They considered their own interpretation of Christianity to be in line with contemporary science and scholarship, and hence as the most reasonable. They believed that their ‘reasonable’ understanding of Christianity was closest to the true meaning of Jesus’s words and deeds, and that they therefore had the best understanding of what *true* piety entailed. Furthermore, they maintained that a correct interpretation of what ‘morality’ is depended on a correct understanding of what ‘piety’ is. As a result, modernist discourse implied that modernists themselves were the ‘spiritual aristocrats’ *par excellence*.

Second, a high level of spiritual development was least likely to be found among lower-class individuals. After all, the latter lacked the time and material resources to ‘improve’ themselves in an intellectual, religious and moral sense. Modernist discourse thus implied that spiritual development had a component of class to it. Of necessity, a ‘spiritual aristocrat’ was a modernist and belonged to the higher strata of society – two characteristics that in large part overlapped: far from all middle- or higher middle-class individuals identified as modernists, but the modernist movement did receive most of its support from bourgeois circles. Modernist values, behaviours and ideals were consequently those of the bourgeoisie. Class-consciousness was intrinsic to liberal Protestantism, not only in the Dutch context; as Harris argues, for example, there has historically been a strong tendency among American Unitarians to believe that others first have to become like them in order to fit into their congregations.<sup>16</sup>

The discourse they used caused modernists to become more and more out of step with the world surrounding them, as the values, behaviours and ideals that they considered as normative came to be severely challenged. Contrary to first-generation modernists’ expectations, the world did not adapt to them. Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants did not patiently try to help others in becoming like themselves; they wanted to bend social life to what they regarded as God’s will.

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<sup>16</sup> Harris, *Elite*, 27, 29, 112.

In order to do so, they organised themselves as mass movements, converting numerical strength into power and influence. The labour movement equally tried to mobilise the masses. Socialist leaders emphasised that individual reform was not a prerequisite for social reform, but rather that individuals would never attain self-realisation without structural changes in the fabric of the social and economic order. Denouncing bourgeois society, they instilled the working classes with a sense of self-worth: the latter were victims of their environment, who did not need to be taught how to behave and to appropriate the same values as the classes above them, but rather had to throw off the bourgeois yoke. Roman Catholics, orthodox Protestants and socialists did not pursue social reform by letting others adapt to them, but rather the opposite: they attempted to restructure and reorganise society and *by so doing* instil others with their values and beliefs. Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants built organisations of their own, which were supposed to engraft their principles into social life.<sup>17</sup> Socialists hoped to build a socialist society, either through revolution or through parliament, to which, once established, everyone had no other choice but to accommodate. The modernist attitude was less militant. The mass culture that these groups brought into being was diametrically opposed to what was expressed in modernist discourse, as a result of which the latter had little appeal. Modernists were socially committed, more so than often acknowledged, but in a way that less and less corresponded to social reality.

Modernist discourse not only prevented the modernist movement from being the popular movement it wanted to be, as this discourse was based on a view of society that became more and more remote from reality due to the emerging mass culture; as explained above, it also caused the modernist movement to become increasingly estranged from intellectual life.

Modernist discourse was thus discordant with the direction in which Dutch society (and society in Northern and Western Europe and North America in general) was developing, causing the modernist movement to lack appeal. Accordingly, the suggestion that the modernist movement would have been able to play a more influential role in church life and society if it had been more tightly organised is questionable at the very least. In fact, modernist discourse not only hindered the modernist movement from becoming better organised in the first place, as it was based on the notion of individual reform through personal contact instead of on the notion of structural reform through collective action; it also caused modernists' commitment to the modernist-based organisations that did come into being to be less intense than Roman Catholics' and neo-Calvinists' commitment to organisations based on their respective principles. In spite of claims that 'laypeople' had by no means a subordinate position, ministers and theologians continued to be just as dominant in the modernist movement as in Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant circles. They were the opinion leaders and the ones who took the lead in creating initiatives to put religious principles into practice. However, when it comes to the involvement of 'laypeople' with these initiatives, the modernist movement on the one hand and the Roman Catholic and orthodox Protestant 'pillars' on the other hand present a different picture.<sup>18</sup> The whole process of pillarisation completely

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<sup>17</sup> Next to this propagandistic motive, historiography discerns two other motives behind pillarisation: a protectionist one and an emancipatory one. The concluding section of chapter 9 has dealt with all three motives in more detail.

<sup>18</sup> The analysis here excludes the socialist pillar that is distinguished in historiography, because it was less extensive than the pillars of Roman Catholics and orthodox Protestants, and because both of the latter were, just as the modernist movement, based on religious instead of political principles. A comparison between these pillars and the modernist movement is therefore more legitimate. Moreover, some modernists participated in the socialist pillar, which hence could not be completely set against the modernist movement.

depended on laypeople's commitment. Laypeople were eager to demonstrate this commitment, for a strong involvement in parochial or congregational life, and an active participation in pillarised organisational life, were regarded as signs of true devoutness, evincing one's 'regenerated' state. Social pressure contributed to this as well: one who showed a lack of commitment was quickly stigmatised as being a 'bad' Christian. Modernist discourse had the opposite effect. As explained in chapter 6, ministers and theologians were regarded in the modernist movement as the obvious individuals to hold leading positions in the sphere of religion. This sphere not only included church life, but *all* activities intended to disseminate religious principles. The idea that ministers and theologians were best-fitted to lead in the sphere of religion fostered passivity: it gave laypeople an incentive to think that such activities could best be left completely to them. Accordingly, the initiators and leaders of organisations based on modernist principles – which were, without exception, ministers and theologians – continuously complained about a lack of lay interest.

This is not to say that the organisations and activities created to permeate society with a liberal Protestant spirit lacked *support* in the form of either members or expressions of sympathy. Yet, feelings of sympathy do not necessarily result in active involvement. Liberal political parties, which could count on massive support in modernist circles, experienced this as well: the urge to actively participate in party political life seems to have been lower among their supporters (those who voted for them) than among the supporters of the political parties that were part of a genuine 'pillar'. Complaints about a lack of involvement of the liberal electorate could regularly be heard in the circle of liberal party executives and in the liberal press, intensifying in the early twentieth century, when the pillarisation of Dutch society reached its apogee. In 1910, for instance, an anonymous editor of the liberal newspaper *De Graafschap-bode* (*Graafschap Messenger*), who had "repeatedly warned against the tepidity and indifference that has come to characterise a large part of the Dutch liberal citizenry and that paralyses the strength of the entire liberal party [the *Liberale Unie*, the *Bond van Vrije Liberalen* and the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond*, TK]," accused liberal voters of making the "mistake" of showing no political commitment:

Many keep aloof from public affairs, are not involved in politics, let things slide – people who could exert a tremendous influence on the course of events [in society] if they would bother to devote some of their time and energy [to politics]. That is why liberal party executives often have a lot of difficulty in finding good candidates for the seats that are at stake during elections.<sup>19</sup>

Whilst making propaganda for the *Vrijheidsbond* in Amsterdam, jurist C.H. Guépin (1874-1935) and notary A.G. Lubbers (1886-1958) noticed twenty-one years later that liberal parties were still confronted with an electorate that was generally uninvolved with politics; more so than other parties.<sup>20</sup> In 1937, to name a last example, an editorial in the liberal *Middelburgsche*

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<sup>19</sup> "Wij hebben reeds menigmaal in ons blad gewaarschuwd tegen de lauwheid en onverschilligheid, die sedert enige jaren over een groot deel der vrijzinnige burgers van Nederland is gekomen en die de werkzaamheid der geheele partij verlamt [...]. De fout bij ons, vrijzinnigen, is: gebrek aan belangstelling. Velen trekken zich van de 'algemeene zaak' terug, doen niet aan politiek, laten 'de boel' maar waaien, die, wanneer ze zich de moeite willen getroosten om ook daaraan een deel van hun tijd en hun kracht te geven, een uitnemenden invloed op den gang der zaken konden oefenen. En zoo komt ook dikwijls de moeite, waarin de besturen zich bevinden, om goede kandidaten te vinden voor de eventueel te bezetten zetels." Quoted from: 'Binnenland – Waarom zijn wij zoo lauw!', *De Graafschap-bode* (1 October 1910), 6.

<sup>20</sup> 'De aanstaande verkiezingen – Een druk bezochte bijeenkomst van den Vrijheidsbond', *Algemeen Handelsblad* CIV.33827 (21 April 1931), morning paper, 6; 'Verkiezingsactie Vrijheidsbond', *Ibid.* CIV.33882 (16 June 1931), evening paper, 6.

*Courant* (Middelburg Newspaper) appeared in which “the liberal part of the electorate,” being the voters of the *Vrijheidsbond*, were blamed for their

lukewarmness that defies all description. With the exception of a few good ones, the willingness to contribute to party activities and to furnish the party with funds is almost completely absent [among liberal voters]. The party itself has [...] not managed to arouse interest and enthusiasm, nor drive its lukewarm supporters to active involvement – which, under the threat of going to ruin, has become necessary in present-day society!<sup>21</sup>

G.Ch. Quarles van Ufford (1865-1952), who represented the *Vrijheidsbond* in the council of the municipality of Bloemendaal at the time, found an explanation for this lack of political commitment in 1938 in the authority that liberal voters attributed to their representatives. “Our members,” he noticed, “regard us as some kind of managers, in whom they have an implicit faith. They do not attend party meetings and tell us when asked [about their lack of involvement]: ‘I trust you anyway, do as you please, I vote liberal in any case’.”<sup>22</sup> In the liberal electorate, an attitude prevailed that was similar to the prevailing attitude in the modernist movement: politics could best be left to politicians, just as the dissemination of religious principles could best be left to ministers and theologians. This attitude was defensible when the bourgeoisie still set the tone in society, when the bourgeoisie could still expect that its values and ideas were the same as those of the men in leading positions. This attitude could contrariwise only lead to marginalisation, as the editor of the *Middelburgsche Courant* rightfully accentuated, in a society developing towards institutionalised religious, political and social pluralism, in a society in which citizens could exert the most influence when they were *actively involved* in mass organisations.<sup>23</sup>

The history of the modernist movement paralleled that of political liberalism in the Netherlands not only in this respect.<sup>24</sup> Just as modernism, political liberalism was imbued with class-consciousness, taking bourgeois interests, ideas and ethics as normative. And, just as the modernist movement, liberal political parties were therefore incapable of adequately responding to developments that challenged bourgeois culture, a culture in which individual development was central, a doctrinal approach to religion was rejected, and national unity was aspired to.

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<sup>21</sup> “Het liberale deel van het kiezersvolk is van een alle omschrijving tartende lauwheid. Den enkelen goede niet te na gesproken ontbreekt welhaast alle de bereidheid tot deelname aan den arbeid en tot verstrekken van geldmiddelen. De partij zelve heeft [...] geen kans gezien, belangstelling en geestdrift te wekken, de ongeorganiseerden in de organisatie te dwingen – wat op straffe van ondergang noodig is geworden in onze huidige maatschappij!” Quoted from: “Ten ondergang gedoemd?”, *Provinciale Zeeuwsche Middelburgsche Courant* CLXXX.130 (5 June 1937), 1.

<sup>22</sup> “Wij worden nu eenmaal door onze leden als een soort directeuren beschouwd, die het volle vertrouwen van de leden hebben. Zij komen niet naar de vergadering en zeggen als men hen er over spreekt: ‘ik vertrouw het wel, ga jullie gang maar, ik stem toch liberaal’.” Quoted from: [G.Ch. Quarles van Ufford in:] *Notulenboeken van de afdeling Bloemendaal van de Bond van Vrije Liberalen, voortgezet als Kiesvereniging “Bloemendaal”, afdeling van de Liberale Staatspartij “De Vrijheidsbond”, bevattende verslagen van bestuurs- en ledenvergaderingen alsmede van de afdeling, 1918-1946*, meeting of 14 March 1938, NL-HaNA, VVD, 2.19.022, inv.nr. 1111.

<sup>23</sup> In line with this, Noordhoff sharply noticed in 1937 that modernists did not have to worry about their position in society and their chances of reaching individuals with their values and ideas “as long as liberal Protestantism was supported by a widespread liberal attitude of mind in our country” (“zoolang het vrijzinnig protestantisme gesteund werd door een wijdverbreide liberale geesteshouding in ons land...”). Quoted from: Noordhoff, *Vrijzinnig protestantisme en onkerkelijkheid*, 17. Bratt, contrasting modernism with Kuyperian orthodoxy, similarly remarks that “modernists [...] needed the protection of elite rule.” Quoted from: J.D. Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper. Modern Calvinist, Christian Democrat* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge 2013), 51.

<sup>24</sup> The history of political liberalism in the Netherlands as sketched in Van Schie’s *Vrijheidsstreven in verdrukking* clearly evinces this.

Political liberalism was unable to overcome its class prejudice when Roman Catholics, orthodox Protestants and socialists mobilised the masses.<sup>25</sup> “The advance of these groups,” as Vonhoff writes in his 1965 sketch of the ‘decent bourgeois gentlemen’, with which he referred to early twentieth-century political liberals,

[has] forced liberals onto the defensive. The principal characteristic of pre-World War II liberalism is, in my opinion, therefore a rather firm defensive attitude. Such a situation almost inevitably leads to rigidity. After all, only the conservative, the die-hard, feels that he still has something to hold on to. It is moreover understandable that, in such circumstances, one’s politics are influenced or even determined by what others do. [...] [In early twentieth-century liberalism,] few reflections can be found that truly contain a vision for the future.<sup>26</sup>

Liberals favoured a configuration of society, a society in which the liberal-minded bourgeoisie set the tone, that more and more fell out of line with what was actually going on in society. They did not know how to deal with the emerging mass culture.<sup>27</sup> As a result, as Vonhoff implies, they became a rearguard, being forced to follow rather than to lead.

The same was true of the modernist movement. Instead of anticipating a church life and a society in which modernist principles of life would be those of the majority, by attempting to instil others with a liberal Protestant spirit (as the first generation of modernists had done), later generations of modernists were forced to *react* to developments in church life and society. The initial expectation that the modernist movement would have an irresistible appeal and would set in motion a second Reformation had not come true, leading to a feeling of disappointment and marginalisation among modernists towards the end of the nineteenth century. The circumstances had not adapted to modernists, hence modernists had to adapt to the circumstances. As a matter of course, the modernist movement shifted its aim from thoroughly reforming church and social life to preventing itself from marginalising even further.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the

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<sup>25</sup> De Rooy, ‘Voorbij de verzuiling?’, 54.

<sup>26</sup> “*Het opdringen van deze groepen [...] [heeft] de liberalen in een defensieve positie gedrongen. De voornaamste eigenschap van het voor-oorlogse liberalisme is voor mijn gevoel dan ook een wat verbeterde afweerhouding. Zo ’n situatie leidt bijna vanzelfsprekend tot starheid. Alleen de palstaander, de onbeweeglijke, heeft immers het gevoel dat hij nog houvast heeft. Verder is het begrijpelijk, dat men in zulke omstandigheden zijn politiek laat beïnvloeden en vaak zelfs bepalen door datgene wat anderen doen. [...] [In het liberalisme van destijds] treft men weinig beschouwingen aan, die werkelijk getuigen van een zekere toekomstvisie.*” Quoted from: H.J.L. Vonhoff, *De zindelijke burgerheren. Een halve eeuw liberalisme* (Baarn 1965), 10.

<sup>27</sup> To liberals’ growing frustration. Consider, for example, the following crass remark published in an editorial in the liberal *Provinciale Groninger Courant* in 1935: “We want to say again that the leaders of the *Vrijheidsbond* are utterly unfit for the tasks they should fulfil in an organisational and propagandist sense at this juncture; that the party leadership consists of too many ‘high-class gentlemen’ and that it is too big and therefore too inflexible; that the *Vrijheidsbond* does not understand the art of raising and effectively using electoral slogans that mobilise perhaps not ‘the’, but at least ‘a’ crowd, while slogans are there for the taking, particularly in the liberal ideology.” (“*Doch nóg eens willen wij zeggen, dat de leiders van de Vrijheidsbond in organisatorische en propagandistische zin voor de arbeid in dit tijdsgewricht ondeugdelijk zijn; dat het partijbestuur te veel ‘deftige heren’ telt, te groot en daarom te log is; dat de Vrijheidsbond niet de kunst verstaat de leuzen, die zoo niet ‘de’ dan toch ‘een’ massa in beweging brengen, aan te heffen en propagandistisch-efficiënt te maken terwijl de leuzen voor ‘t opscheppen liggen, juist in de liberale ideologie.*”) Yet the only remedy mentioned in this editorial was a reorganisation of the *Vrijheidsbond* – as such, the intrinsic lack of appeal of political liberalism was not fully recognised. Quoted in: ‘De pers – Liberale zelfcritiek’, *Algemeen Handelsblad* CVIII.35278 (25 April 1935), morning paper, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Cf.: L.J. van Holk, ‘Strijd om waarheid; vrede in vrijheid’, in: J. de Graaf, L.J. van Holk and J.M. van Veen (eds.), *Vrijzinnige levensontplooiing. Drie opstellen over verleden en toekomst van het vrijzinnig christendom* (Baarn [1980]), 36-62, there 52.

awareness that modernism was not becoming the dominant force in church life and society, as the earliest modernists had expected, curbed modernists' reform-mindedness.

It is against this background that the direction in which the modernist movement developed in the early twentieth century needs to be interpreted. The term '*vrijzinnig*' came to be preferred over '*modern*', because of increasing uneasiness with the triumphalism and unfulfilled reformist pretensions associated with this last term, and because '*vrijzinnig*' could include both modernists and moderate orthodoxy, giving modernists the hope of expanding their sphere of influence. In liberal Reformed circles, the ideal of the *volkskerk* came to be accentuated, fuelled by the thought that the Dutch Reformed Church was modernists' only gateway to the masses and that, due to its theologically diverse character, it offered modernists the only opportunity to exert influence on orthodoxy. Staying in the Dutch Reformed Church and finding a *modus vivendi* with orthodoxy accordingly became more important than striving for a new kind of community of faith. Those modernists who championed the idea of a federation of 'free religious' associations did so to increase the visibility and influence of the modernist movement in society. Those who urged the modernist movement to concern itself with social work believed that through such work, modernists could reach individuals whom they had failed to reach so far. Modernists who associated themselves with the socialist labour movement urged their co-religionists to do the same, arguing that the modernist movement would otherwise miss the boat. They were convinced that society was developing in a socialist direction and that the future of the modernist movement was hence a socialist one. The editorial reform of *De Hervorming* effectuated in 1918 was motivated by the desire to let the modernist movement exert a stronger influence on 'intellectuals', who controlled public opinion. Calls for separate modernist-based organisations in civil society stemmed from the feeling that modernists had no other choice but to go along with the process of pillarisation, to make themselves better heard in social life and to make sure that they would not be overlooked completely. Finally, modernist advocates of foreign mission came to stress in around 1900 that involvement with foreign mission would breathe new life into the modernist movement, and was necessary to prevent Roman Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy from becoming just as powerful in the Dutch East Indies as in the Netherlands.

Modernist rhetoric in the early twentieth century suggests that the modernist movement acted on the offensive: after all, the guiding thought in all of the examples above was formulated in terms of an expansion of modernists' influence and visibility in church and society. Yet, the motivation to strive for such an expansion was actually purely *defensive*: while it had been first-generation modernists' *Leitmotiv* to 'conquer' the world, their spiritual heirs wanted to become more influential due to a feeling of marginalisation and the fear that liberal Protestantism would otherwise lose its significance altogether. The latter had to reconcile themselves to the situation with which they were confronted, in order to continue to play a role in church and social life. All in all, the modernist movement clearly did not *set* the trends; it was *overtaken* by developments.

## 5. Suggestions for Further Research

As said in the introductory chapter, liberal Protestantism has been largely ignored in (Dutch) historiography. Giving this study a broad scope, with regard to both the themes and the period it covers, and embedding it in a context as extensive as possible, my intention has been to contribute to filling in historiography's 'blind spot' for the Dutch modernist movement. Here, I would like



to make several suggestions for further research that builds on my analysis of Dutch modernist history.<sup>29</sup>

First, this study has mostly dealt with the modernist movement, centred round the NPB, at the national level, focusing on discussions and developments that affected it as a whole. Yet, from its founding onwards, the NPB has not only been an association existing at the national level, but also a federation of local branches. So far, as mentioned in the introduction, the history of several NPB branches has been chronicled, for the most part in booklets that these branches have issued themselves. The scope of nearly all of these booklets is limited to what has happened *within* the branches, as a result of which hardly anything is known about the position NPB branches had in the local communities in which they were embedded. Studies that do discuss the development of NPB branches in relation to the context of local society are Wolffram's 1993 dissertation on the Gelderland town of Harderwijk, Van Miert's 1994 doctoral thesis on Tiel and Winschoten, provincial towns in Gelderland and Groningen respectively, and Jonker's 2010 monograph on the South Holland villages of Ameide and Tienhoven.<sup>30</sup> Wolffram, Van Miert and Jonker analyse social transitions at the local level between the mid-nineteenth century and the interwar period, particularly the extent to which social life in the aforementioned towns and villages became institutionally compartmentalised along religious and political lines. Their analysis includes modernists' involvement in, and reactions to, these transitions. I would strongly welcome studies on local NPB branches that follow their example. Such studies could reconstruct local networks of modernists, disclosing possible prosopographical patterns in the modernist movement as a whole: they could determine how much support this movement actually enjoyed outside of the bourgeois classes, how much support socialist parties actually received among modernists, and how local groups of modernists exactly coped with political and denominational differences existing within them.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, they could show the impact that the developments and discussions analysed in the previous chapters have had on the rank and file of the NPB.

A second theme calling for further research is politics. While some attention has been paid in historiography to liberal Protestants' involvement with socialist and liberal political parties at the national level, their participation in local electoral associations and local branches of these parties is still unexplored. A combination of research on NPB branches, for which I have called above, local branches of political parties, and local club life in general could give insight into the institutional embedment of liberal Protestantism in local daily life, liberal Protestant group formation, and liberal Protestants' attempts to exercise (political) power in local communities. Furthermore, hardly anything is known about liberal Protestants' involvement with parties other than socialist and liberal ones. Particularly after 1917, when the replacement of the constituency voting system by an electoral system of proportional representation and the introduction of universal suffrage increased the chances of gaining a seat in parliament, dozens of parties were founded. What was the relationship between the modernist movement and these new parties? There is a sound reason to dive into this question, as the parties founded in or after 1917

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<sup>29</sup> I leave aside the rather obvious suggestion to extend my analysis to the period *after* 1940.

<sup>30</sup> Wolffram, *Bezwaarden en verlichten*; Van Miert, *Wars van clubgeest en partijzucht*; Jonker, *Macht en armoede aan de rivier*.

<sup>31</sup> For the city of Groningen, such a reconstruction of local modernist networks based on research in the archives of the local NPB branch and other local organisations is given in: Houkes, 'Vrijzinnige netwerken in Groningen (1867-1900)'. For the town of Tholen, see: Cossee, 'De Protestantenbond op Tholen'.

recruited most of their voters from the electorate of liberal parties, which could traditionally rely on the majority of modernist votes.<sup>32</sup> One of the most successful new parties, the *Plattelandersbond* (League of Countryfolk), may serve as an illustration thereof: established in 1917, one of its bulwarks was Drenthe, a province in which it seems to have snuck voters from the *Vrijzinnig-Democratische Bond* in particular, and in which liberal Protestants' position was relatively strong in comparison to other provinces.<sup>33</sup> Was there indeed a correlation between the rise of new parties as the *Plattelandersbond* and the geographical distribution of liberal Protestants? And if so: why? Could it be that these parties profited from the increasing dissatisfaction with liberal parties in the modernist movement, as discussed in chapter 9?

Interestingly, the *Plattelandersbond* seems to have lost, in turn, a good deal of its electorate in Drenthe to the *Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging* (National Socialist Movement or NSB) in the mid-1930s.<sup>34</sup> This touches upon another matter: the relationship between the modernist movement and fascism. In 2015, several studies were published dealing with Protestant responses to National Socialism.<sup>35</sup> Yet, as often in Dutch historiography on Protestantism, *liberal* Protestants do not appear in them. It is known that several modernist ministers and theologians have been sympathetic towards fascism.<sup>36</sup> Of the approximately fifteen Dutch Reformed ministers who are known to have joined the NSB, a "significant amount" identified with the liberal current in this church.<sup>37</sup> In addition, five Mennonite ministers became NSB members, of whom C.B. Hylkema was the most prominent.<sup>38</sup> Being described as the earliest party ideologist of the NSB, Hylkema glorified fascism for the corporatist form of government it favoured, the national unity after which it aspired, and the 'civic religion' with which it wanted to permeate social life.<sup>39</sup> Was Hylkema representative of modernists with fascist sympathies? I am inclined to believe that what appealed to him in fascism was indeed what attracted other modernists to fascism as well: a corporatist state that would integrate the Dutch into national organisations based on a Christianity above religious differences offered an alternative to the existing pillarised organisation of society.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>32</sup> R. de Jong, *Electoral culture en politieke oriëntatie. Verkiezingen in Gelderland, 1888-1940* (Hilversum 2005), 140.

<sup>33</sup> The probability that the VDB lost liberal Protestant voters to the *Plattelandersbond* in Drenthe in the 1920s is mentioned in: Klijnsma, *Om de democratie*, 292.

<sup>34</sup> L. de Jong, *Het Koninkrijk der Nederlanden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog I. Voorspel* (The Hague 1969), 253-256; Vos, *Geschiedenis van het socialisme I*, 193; Te Slaa and Klijn, *Ontstaan en opkomst van de Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging*, 69.

<sup>35</sup> J. Ridderbos, *Predikanten in de frontlinie. De gevolgen van deelname aan het (kerkelijk) verzet in Nederland tijdens WOII* (Barneveld 2015); E.G. Bosma, *Oude waarheid en nieuwe orde. Bevindelijk gereformeerden en het nationaal-socialisme 1920-1950* (Apeldoorn 2015); J.Th.M. Bank, *God in de oorlog. De rol van de kerk in Europa 1939-1945* (Amsterdam 2015). Particularly the two last-mentioned monographs led to turmoil in the Protestant press.

<sup>36</sup> G.H. van Senden is a prominent example.

<sup>37</sup> G.G. Hoekema, 'Idealisten en baasjes met oogkleppen voor. Voorgangers van doopsgezinde gemeenten die van 1933 tot 1945 aangesproken werden door het gedachtegoed van de NSB of tijdens de oorlog meewerkten met de Duitse bezetter', *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen. Nieuwe reeks* XLI (2015), 183-246, there 188. See also: G.D. Homan, 'Nederlandse doopsgezinden in de Tweede Wereldoorlog', *Ibid.* XXI (1995), 165-197.

<sup>38</sup> Hoekema, 'Idealisten en baasjes met oogkleppen voor', 184.

<sup>39</sup> Set forth in: C.B. Hylkema, *Het Nederlandsch fascisme. Wat het is, wat het leert, hoe het geworden is* (Utrecht [1934]). For the qualification of Hylkema as the earliest 'ideologist' of the NSB, see: Hoekema, 'Idealisten en baasjes met oogkleppen voor', 201.

<sup>40</sup> Some members of the CHU showed an interest in corporatism, not necessarily in a fascist form, because of similar objections against pillarised society. See: T.E.M. Krijger, 'Het corporatieve Portugal als lichtend voorbeeld? Nederlandse protestantse stemmen over de grondvesting van de "Estado Novo" van António de Oliveira Salazar', *Groniek CCI* (2015), 451-468.

The issue of gender in relation to the modernist movement is a third theme that deserves further attention.<sup>41</sup> At the *Protestantendag* of 1892, Emilie Knappert lectured on the role of women in the NPB. Mentioning Sunday schools, religious education, district nursing and university extension as examples of fields of activity suitable to women, she ended her speech with

the heartfelt wish that the *Protestantenbond* will do whatever it can to prepare cultured women in modernist circles for work that it could offer us, women, in all kinds of forms – work that not only requires specific know-how, but also discretion and decency, emotional sensitivity and warm-heartedness, which are all no unfeminine characteristics, to be sure. The woman will work next to the man, serenely and steadfastly.<sup>42</sup>

To what extent did her wish come true? Or, to put it more broadly, what exactly was the role and position of women in the modernist movement? So far, attention to gender in the modernist movement has almost exclusively been paid in studies dealing with the first female ministers in the Netherlands. These female ‘pioneers’ were, due to biblically motivated objections to women entering the ministry in orthodox churches, all inducted into liberal Protestant congregations. As of the late 1890s, the first religious services led by women were held in the Free Congregation in Amsterdam and in NPB branches. The actual *ordination* of the first female Dutch minister, Anne Zernike (1887-1972), took place in the Mennonite congregation in the Frisian village of Bovenkrijpe in 1911. Women were allowed to be ordained as ministers in the Remonstrant Brotherhood as of 1915, and in the Evangelical Lutheran Church as of 1922. Although there was support for the ordination of female ministers in liberal Reformed circles from the early twentieth century onwards as well, the synod of the Dutch Reformed Church gave congregations the freedom to have their services led by women only as late as 1967.<sup>43</sup> In Dutch Protestantism, modernists thus took the lead in ordaining women as ministers, but they did not do so without any resistance. In fact, in the early twentieth-century modernist movement, strong objections to female ministers were raised – for psychological rather than religious reasons: the nature or disposition of women was said to lack the qualities necessary to be a minister. Those in favour

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<sup>41</sup> Arguing that gender issues have so far been neglected in Dutch historiography, De Baar mentions modernism or liberal Protestantism as one of the themes that need to be studied in relation to gender in particular. See: M.P.A. de Baar, ‘Cherchez la femme... Een blinde vlek in de VNK-bundels?’, in: Abels et al. (eds.), *Terug naar Gouda*, 29-40, there 40.

<sup>42</sup> “...den hartelijken wensch dat de *Protestantenbond* al doe wat hij kan om beschaafde vrouwen uit zijnen kring op te leiden tot het werk, dat hij in zoo velerlei vorm aan ons vrouwen heeft aan te bieden, werk waarbij naast bepaalde vakkennis, tact en kieschheid, fijnheid van gevoel en warmte van gemoed zoo noodig zijn, alle geen onvrouwelijke eigenschappen voorwaar. Naast den man zal de vrouw haar werk doen, rustig en trouw.” Quoted from: E.C. Knappert, *De taak van de vrouw in den Nederlandschen Protestantenvond. Rede, gehouden op den Protestantendag te Kampen, 26 October 1892* (Amsterdam 1892), 14.

<sup>43</sup> M. Gosker, ‘Gods “ja” en het “nee” van de kerk. Ambts-theologische notities bij de vrouw in het ambt’, in: De Baar et al. (eds.), *Honderd jaar vrouwen op de kansel, 1911-2011*, 53-67, there 58-59. Biographies of the first female preacher in the Free Congregation and the first ordained Mennonite, Remonstrant and Lutheran female ministers are given in: De Baar, ‘Jacoba Frederika Daniëlla Mossel’; F. Pitstra, ‘Anne Mankes-Zernike (1887-1972). Eerste vrouw in “het wonderbare ambt”’, in: *Ibid.*, 83-92; T.R. Barnard, ‘Frederika Willemina Rappold (1890-1975). De eerste predikante binnen de Remonstrantse Broederschap’, in: *Ibid.*, 101-110; Th.A. Fafié, ‘Jantine Auguste Haumersen (1881-1967). De eerste vrouwelijke lutherse predikant in Nederland’, in: *Ibid.*, 111-119. Although women were allowed to become ministers in the Dutch Reformed Church as of 1967, congregations affiliated to the *Gereformeerde Bond* (Reformed League), the theologically most orthodox organised current in this church, continued to deny women access to their pulpits. Women did receive the right to enter the ministry in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands in 1969 and in the small *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken* (Netherlands Reformed Churches) in 2004.

of the ordination of female ministers repudiated that argument: in their eyes, the female psyche was actually pre-eminently fit for ministerial duties.<sup>44</sup>

This link between characteristics that were supposed to be ‘intrinsic’ to female nature and labour participation of women is also made in Knappert’s words quoted above. Duties with which the NPB could charge women, Knappert implied, were only those for which, as she believed, such characteristics were required. Although she did not explicitly say so, as that was obvious to her audience, her words moreover only applied to unmarried women: at the time, it was generally seen as a sign of low social status when a married woman was working outside of the home. Knappert made this aspect of class-consciousness explicit by repeatedly stressing in her lecture that she was only talking of *cultured* women.

Knappert’s words reinforce my supposition that with regard to female labour participation, the modernist movement perhaps differed in degree to society at large, but not so much in principle. In line with my argument that the modernist movement was not as radical as modernist rhetoric suggests and that the class-consciousness with which modernist discourse was imbued put a check on reform-mindedness, I assume that modernists’ thoughts on ‘gender’ remained in consonance with bourgeois morals. On the whole, the modernist movement was not fighting on the barricades. Hardly any of the *protagonists* of first-wave feminism *actively* participated in or *explicitly* identified with the modernist movement.<sup>45</sup> My supposition is that those women, just as the ‘intellectuals’ dealt with in chapter 8, identified the modernist movement too much with the bourgeois standards against which they made a stand. Moreover, the decision of liberal Protestant churches to ordain female ministers seems to have not only been a matter of principle. As F. Pijper, one of the first to urge liberal Protestant churches to make this decision, argued in 1904, a potential shortage of ministers might at one point turn the ordination of female ministers into dire necessity.<sup>46</sup> In general, (liberal Protestant) church life tended to rely more on women: in a brochure published in the early 1920s, for example, it was noticed that girls and young women were significantly more involved with the liberal Protestant youth organisations than boys and young men.<sup>47</sup> Could it be that these trends caused ‘feminine’ characteristics to be accentuated or even appreciated more, and modernist women to receive more responsibilities in church life, such as being a minister, and in social life, such as doing *toynbeewerk*?<sup>48</sup> Did

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<sup>44</sup> M.P.A. de Baar and F. Pitstra, ‘Van “artikel van weelde” tot beroep. Discussies over de geschiktheid van vrouwen voor de theologiëstudie en het predikambt, 1898-1913’, in: *Ibid.*, 15-36, there 22-33. Even after liberal Protestant churches allowed women to enter the ministry, objections against female ministers continued to exist in the modernist movement. See, e.g.: [S.H.N. Gorter], ‘In den stroom – De predikante’, *De Stroom* II.49 (17 November 1923), 2-3; Barnard, ‘Frederika Willemina Rappold (1890-1975)’, 101-103.

<sup>45</sup> Jansz sees a connection between liberal Protestantism and first-wave feminism. See: U. Jansz, *Denken over sekse in de eerste feministische golf* (Amsterdam 1990), 198. However, organised feminism and the modernist movement were certainly not closely linked together – the modernist movement as such was not intrinsically feminist. In *De Hervorming*, article writers, including women, tended to be rather reserved in their appreciation of feminism. Of course, this is not to say that there were no feminist modernists and that a liberal Protestant persuasion could not be a source of feminism. See: De Baar, *Religie en feminisme in de negentiende eeuw*.

<sup>46</sup> F. Pijper, ‘Vrouwelijke studenten in de theologie’, *Theologisch Tijdschrift* XXXVIII (1903), 1-16, there 15.

<sup>47</sup> L.J. van Holk, ‘Jeugd en religie’, in: *Vrijzinnig Christelijke Jongerenbond – Jong modernisme*, 26-36, there 32. Van Holk noticed that the ‘feminine element’ also began to dominate in liberal Protestant church life.

<sup>48</sup> In this respect, Monteiro asks whether “the ordination of women [was] meant as a strategy to stop [the] process of dechurching” and which consequences the ordination of women had “in terms of the increase or decrease of the flock, pastoral profile, or religious renewal.” Quoted from: M.E. Monteiro, ‘Review of “Honderd jaar vrouwen op de kansel”’, *Church History and Religious Culture* XCII (2012), 623-625, there 624-625. In any case, it did not give the modernist movement more appeal in the long run.

the modernist movement in due course become more ‘feminine’ both qualitatively and quantitatively? Further research is needed to answer these questions and to put my assumptions regarding modernism and gender to the test.

A fourth theme worthy to be studied in closer detail is modernists’ attitude towards Roman Catholicism. An unfavourable outlook on ‘Rome’ was innate to liberal Protestantism: modernists looked down upon Roman Catholicism for its supernatural interpretation of Christianity, its doctrinal theology, its hierarchical ecclesiology, its ritualistic liturgy, and its lust for power in the public domain – in sum, they considered it to be the exact opposite of, and a threat to, everything that they stood for themselves.<sup>49</sup> The *Evangelische Maatschappij* (Gospel Society), which tried to defend what it perceived as the ‘Protestant’ character of the Dutch nation, and the *Gustaaf Adolfvereeniging* (Association ‘Gustaf Adolf’), which promoted Protestant interests in regions with a Roman Catholic majority, accordingly attracted much support in modernist circles: meetings of these organisations were consistently announced and reported in *De Hervorming*, while prominent modernists served on their boards or wrote publications on their behalf.<sup>50</sup> However, in the 1920s, more favourable opinions on Roman Catholicism could be heard in the modernist movement. In 1920, for example, K.F. Proost and his fellow editors of *De Hervorming* were accused of paying too much attention to Rome and were blamed for the “appreciative spirit” in which they did so. Proost assumed “that this criticism is mainly voiced by elderly modernists, for it seems to me to be undeniable that the younger generation indeed relates to the Roman religion somewhat differently.”<sup>51</sup> A year later, H.T. de Graaf even acknowledged that “Roman and modern Christianity have a good deal in common,” much more than older generations of modernists had recognised.<sup>52</sup> Why did more appreciation of Roman Catholicism come to manifest itself in the modernist movement, in spite of the continuing fear of growing Catholic influence in Dutch political and social life?<sup>53</sup> It seems that a distinction came to be made between Roman Catholicism as a religion, and the worldly aspirations of the Roman Catholic Church, a distinction earlier generations of modernists did not make. Was this a direct consequence of the ‘ecclesial turn’ and the related rise of anti-intellectualist ‘mystical youngsters’, malcontents and right-wing modernists, among whom traditional Christian terminology and symbolism, ritualism and mysticism were positively approached?

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<sup>49</sup> Anti-Catholic sentiments in the modernist movement during its earliest phase are dealt with in: Ch.E. Smit, “‘De moderne theoloog stelt zich hier aan als een kleine paus.’ Aspecten van het discours tussen protestantse modernen en rooms-katholieken, 1865-1870”, in: Mikkers and Smit (eds.), *Tussen Augustinus en atheïsme*, 109-123.

<sup>50</sup> It is telling that the history of these associations has been chronicled by modernists: J. Herderscheê, *De Evangelische Maatschappij. Beknopt overzicht van hare geschiedenis* (Rotterdam 1903); J.H. Maronier, *De Nederlandsche Gustaaf-Adolf-Vereeniging, 1853-1908* (Leiden 1909); H.G. van Wijngaarden, *Rome-Dordt. Gedenkboek uitgegeven ter gelegenheid van het vijfen zeventig-jarig bestaan der Evangelische Maatschappij, opgericht 1853* (Huis ter Heide 1928).

<sup>51</sup> “...waardeerenden geest...”; “...het lijkt mij niet te loochenen dat het jongere geslacht inderdaad eenigszins anders zich tegenover de Roomsche religie verhoudt.” Quoted from: K.F. Proost, ‘Kunst en letteren – Roomsche toneel’, *De Hervorming* 1920-43 (30 October 1920), 170. Proost expressed himself in similar terms in: K.F. Proost, ‘Boekbespreking – “Romantiek en katholicisme”’, *Ibid.* 1926-51 (18 December 1926), 404-405, there 404.

<sup>52</sup> “...veel gemeenschappelijks bestaat tusschen het Roomsche en het moderne christendom.” Quoted from: H.T. de Graaf, ‘Godsdienst en maatschappij – Naschrift van de redactie’, *Ibid.* 1921-51 (24 December 1921), 405-406, there 406.

<sup>53</sup> As *De Hervorming* shows, modernists even came to perceive this threat as more acute than ever in the 1920s: the Roman Catholic Church dethroned the Dutch Reformed Church as the largest church denomination in the Netherlands. See: Faber et al., *Ontkerkelijking en buitenkerkelijkheid*, 31.

In the 1910s and 1920s, the Roman Catholic Church proved to be an intriguing phenomenon for modernists: as discussed in an increasing number of articles in *De Hervorming*, it managed to expand its scope of influence, to gain numerical superiority over Protestant church denominations, and even to exert attraction on some of the nation's intellectual and cultural upper crust.<sup>54</sup> Its development sharply contrasted with that of the modernist movement. How on earth, modernists wondered, was this possible: had the papacy not declared war on progress and the modern age in the nineteenth century? Had the Roman Catholic Church not re-emphasised that it had nothing to offer intellectuals, by forcefully eradicating theologically liberal tendencies in its midst in the 1900s? These tendencies were collectively labelled 'modernism', which, obviously, invites a comparison with Protestant modernism.<sup>55</sup> With regard to this, E.G.E. van der Wall gives some fruitful suggestions in a 2006 essay.<sup>56</sup> In light of my study and the argument I make therein, it would be particularly relevant to follow her suggestion to take 'style and language' as a thematic focus, in order to investigate Catholic modernist discourse and to see to what extent it resembled Protestant modernist discourse.<sup>57</sup>

The international dimension of liberal Protestantism is a fifth theme requiring more research. Chapter 11 has analysed the development of the modernist movement in the Netherlands in comparison to similar movements elsewhere. Did these groups not only develop parallel to each other, but have they also mutually influenced each other's development? In other words, did their encounters lead to actual 'cultural transfers'? The proceedings of the international conferences of religious liberals that were held from 1901 onwards (and have been neglected in historiography) as well as the opinion magazines affiliated to the sister associations of the NPB are crucial sources to answer these questions.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, integrally and systematically studying these magazines could answer the question of whether liberal Protestants in the Netherlands and those elsewhere have used the same discourse.<sup>59</sup> *Le Progrès Religieux*, a magazine I have already gone through in its entirety, shows that this was indeed the case with regard to liberal Protestants in Alsace-Lorraine. Alongside such magazines, another periodical calling for an in-depth analysis is the *Stemmen*

<sup>54</sup> Conversions of Dutch intellectual and cultural leaders to Roman Catholicism in the early twentieth century are documented in: P.M. Luykx, "*Daar is nog poëzie, nog kleur, nog warmte.*" *Katholieke bekeerlingen en moderniteit in Nederland, 1880-1960* (Hilversum 2007). For an international perspective, see: Allitt, *Catholic Converts*; F. Gugelot, *La conversion des intellectuels au catholicisme en France (1885-1935)* (Paris 1998); Chr. Heidrich, *Die Konvertiten. Über religiöse und politische Bekehrungen* (Munich 2002).

<sup>55</sup> One example of more or less contemporary Dutch Protestant modernist interest in Roman Catholic modernism is: F. Pijper, *Het modernisme en andere stroomingen in de Katholieke Kerk* (Amsterdam 1921).

<sup>56</sup> Van der Wall, 'Protestants en rooms-katholiek modernisme', 63-88. See also: Kenis and Van der Wall, *Religious Modernism in the Low Countries*.

<sup>57</sup> As Van der Wall points out, Roman Catholic historiography emphasises that Catholic modernism was no *organised* movement. See: *Ibid.*, 86. This does not mean that there was no modernist *network* in the Roman Catholic Church in the early 1900s. See, e.g.: M. DeVito, *The New York Review, 1905-1908* (New York 1977); R. Scott Appleby, "*Church and Age, Unite!*" *The Modernist Impulse in American Catholicism* (Notre Dame 1992), 91-167. Contacts between Catholic and Protestant modernists have indeed existed, at least at the individual level. At the 1907 international congress of religious liberals, for example, French Catholic modernist priest Albert Houtin (1867-1926) was present and held a lecture. This was three years before the effectuation of the 'Oath against Modernism', which all clergymen and theologians in the Roman Catholic Church were forced to swear. See: A. Houtin, 'The Crisis in the Catholic Church', in: Wendte (ed.), *Freedom and Fellowship in Religion*, 232-239; C.J.T. Talar, 'A Modernist among Liberals. Albert Houtin at the Fourth International Congress of Religious Liberals', *U.S. Catholic Historian* XX.3 (2002), 23-31.

<sup>58</sup> See also: E.G.E. van der Wall, 'Een wereldparlement van vrijzinnigen. Religie en transnationalisme (1900-1914)', in: Van Driel and Houkes (eds.), *Het vrijzinnige web*, 157-179, there 164.

<sup>59</sup> It could also show what the impact of the lectures referred to in the paragraph above was at the national level.

*uit de Vrije Hollandsche Gemeente te Grand Rapids*.<sup>60</sup> This could explain how liberal Protestants tried to build a community of their own amidst a Dutch colony of predominantly orthodox Calvinist migrants. In Grand Rapids, they were a religious minority within an ethnic minority, making them an interesting case in the history of the Dutch diaspora. A last magazine that I would like to mention here is the *Maandblad van de Groep van Vrijzinnig Godsdienstigen in Nederlandsch-Indië* (*Monthly of the Group of Religious Liberals in the Dutch East Indies*), issued as of 1929 and appearing from 1938 onwards as *Om het hoogste goed* (*For the Sake of the Highest Good*).<sup>61</sup> This could form the basis of a study on liberal Protestantism and particularly the activities of the NPB in the Dutch East Indies, about which little is known.<sup>62</sup> This is probably due to the absence of an archive of the Commission for the East Indies of the NPB. Yet, when an organisation lacks an archive, research in the periodical press can help to gain more insight into its ins and outs. Another matter having to do with the East Indies is Dutch liberal Protestants' views on colonialism, touched upon in chapter 10. Did their general lack of enthusiasm for mission have consequences for their outlook on Dutch colonial rule?

For all of the questions and issues addressed in this concluding chapter to be solved, historians studying the history of Dutch Protestantism need to get liberal Protestants more firmly in their sights. In the theatre of history, the play on Dutch Protestantism cannot be properly performed as long as some of its characters are missing.

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<sup>60</sup> The *Stemmen uit de Vrije Gemeente*, on which Hugenholtz's magazine was modelled, deserve to be further studied as well – as De Baar argues, this magazine is a vital source for exploring the field of sociability in liberal Protestant circles. See: De Baar, *Religie en feminisme in de negentiende eeuw*, 39, note 73.

<sup>61</sup> When this magazine ceased to exist is uncertain. The last reference to it that I could find was made in late 1941: 'Stemmen van overal – Als ziende...', *De Sumatra Post* XLIII.270 (29 November 1941), 7.

<sup>62</sup> On behalf of Dutch liberal Protestants living in the East Indies, and also with the intention to permeate the Dutch East Indies with a liberal Protestant spirit, the VPRO transmitted programmes through the channel of the *Philips Omroep Holland-Indië* (Philips Holland-Indies Broadcasting Corporation) in 1933 and between 1936 and 1941. See: R. Witte, 'De VPRO passeert de evenaar. Uitgangspunten van de koloniale omroep', in: Van den Heuvel et al. (eds.), *Een vrij zinnige verhouding*, 181-231, there 208-216.

## EPILOGUE

### The Modernist Movement and Modern Theology: Two Different Stories?

In the introductory chapter, a distinction has been made between the modernist movement and modern theology. This study has only dealt with the former, the history of which reads, as sketched in Drijver's 1930 article referred to at the beginning of the concluding chapter, as a story of decline. Several authors suggest that the history of modern theology, on the other hand, has been a success story, at least in the long run. In three 2009 articles, for example, orthodox Dutch Reformed theologians S. Janse and G. van den Brink demonstrate that the hermeneutical principles underlying the historical-critical approach to biblical texts, which were first applied by modernist theologians in the nineteenth century, have ultimately not left the academic study of the Bible in Dutch Protestant orthodoxy unaffected.<sup>1</sup> What is more, as German theologian M. Oeming claims with regard to biblical studies on a global scale, "the historical-critical method is the academic standard which every student of theology in an academic setting must learn. Academic interpretation of the Bible is almost synonymous with historical-critical interpretation."<sup>2</sup>

Not only the principles of modern theology have come to be accepted outside of liberal Protestantism as it emerged in the mid-nineteenth century; even concrete theological points of view that previously only circulated among modernists came to be found outside of the narrow circle of modernists in the course of the twentieth century. In the so-called '*middenorthodoxie*', the dominant post-World War II current within the Dutch Reformed Church to which the introduction has referred, liberal views on Jesus, the Bible, sin and redemption have been, according to several authors, widespread ever since the emergence of this current.<sup>3</sup> Theologically liberal interpretations not only attained a broader reach within the Dutch Reformed Church; in the second half of the twentieth century, they also became apparent in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, which had come into being in the late nineteenth century as a bulwark of anti-modernist orthodoxy.<sup>4</sup> Some authors therefore go so far as to label the theological mainstream in late twentieth-century Dutch Protestantism – and Roman Catholicism – as 'liberal'.<sup>5</sup> Sociologist of religion M.B. ter Borg even claims that a 'liberal' attitude to and outlook on life, which modernists upheld in the sphere of theology, has become mainstream in society at large as of the 1960s; "liberalism," he accordingly contends, "can be seen as the most successful current within Dutch Christianity."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> S. Janse, 'Het goede nieuws en het moeilijke nieuws. De verwerking van de historisch-kritische methode in de Nederlandse orthodoxie', *Theologia Reformata* LII.1 (March 2009), 6-28, esp. 14-15; G. van den Brink, 'Orthodox-christelijke theologie en historisch-kritisch bijbelonderzoek. Een repliek', *Ibid.*, 29-51, esp. 31-32; S. Janse, 'Dupliek: hoe is dat dan in de praktijk van de bijbeluitleg?', *Ibid.*, 52-55.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from: M. Oeming (J.F. Vette ed.), *Contemporary Biblical Hermeneutics. An Introduction* (Aldershot and Burlington 2006), 31. As said in the introduction, this does not mean that the historical-critical method is unchallenged.

<sup>3</sup> E.g.: Impeta, *Kaart van kerkelijk Nederland*, 76; J. van der Graaf, 'Vrijzinnigheid in de Hervormde Kerk en in de Gereformeerde Kerken', *De Waarheidsvriend* LXXXI.8 (25 February 1993), 2-4, there 2; [M.B. ter Borg in:] "'Toekomst is aan de vrijzinnigen'", *Reformatisch Dagblad* XXXVIII.171 (20 October 2008), 2.

<sup>4</sup> For a general overview, see: Veenhof, 'Geschiedenis van theologie en spiritualiteit in de Gereformeerde Kerken', 67-77.

<sup>5</sup> E.g.: [T.H. Zock in:] J. van der Graaf, 'Vrijzinnig en rechtzinnig – Op het scherp van de snede', *De Waarheidsvriend* LXXXVI.8 (19 February 1998), 118-120, there 119.

<sup>6</sup> "En dat terwijl de vrijzinnigheid toch gezien zou kunnen worden als de meest succesvolle stroming binnen het Nederlandse christendom." Quoted from: M.B. ter Borg, 'Vrijzinnigheid als mentaliteit: de heersende manier van



It cannot be doubted that ‘liberal’ theological points of view, such as a metaphorical interpretation of the resurrection of Christ, a denial or nuancing of absolute biblical authority, and a rejection of the concept of original sin, have indeed in due course surfaced outside of the church communities from which the modernist movement recruited its supporters. However, what *should* be doubted is whether there is a straight line running from modern theology as it emerged in the mid-nineteenth century to theologically liberal tendencies within historically non-modernist church communities in the course of the twentieth century. In other words, were those church communities eventually *penetrated* by modernism or did the liberal tendencies within them stem from an *inner* process of theological reorientation?

As for the *middenorthodoxie* in the Dutch Reformed Church, that question is hard to answer. After all, as said in the introduction, the boundaries between the liberal current in the Dutch Reformed Church, centred round the VVH, and the *middenorthodoxie* have been rather fluid ever since the emergence of this last current. Because of these fluid boundaries, modernist influences can be traced in the *middenorthodoxie* – for example, right-wing modernist G.J. Heering, himself a Remonstrant, was widely read among those who sympathised with this current.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, these fluid boundaries did not leave those standing in the tradition of modern theology unaffected either – Molendijk even states that the strong influence of Karl Barth’s neo-orthodoxy on the *middenorthodoxie* has been “disastrous for traditional liberal theology.”<sup>8</sup>

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands are a different case: other than the Dutch Reformed Church, they did not harbour a modernist current. The theologically liberal tendencies emerging within them as of the 1960s, to which particularly the names of theologians H.M. Kuitert, H. Wiersinga, T. Baarda and C.J. den Heyer are attached, have therefore been depicted as modernist influences *slipping into* neo-Calvinist theology. Several authors argue that the theologians mentioned here came to adopt interpretations that modern theology had already put forward in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup> However, the resemblance between the conclusions reached by modernist theologians on the one hand, and Reformed theologians such as Kuitert and Wiersinga on the other, does not necessarily mean that the former have *influenced* the latter. It is more plausible to assume that the latter ‘got stuck’ in doctrinal neo-Calvinism and began to search for new ways of interpreting Christianity. I therefore agree with Molendijk that theologically liberal tendencies in historically non-modernist church communities should not be seen as the result of “direct modernist influence,” but that these rather had to do with “the fact that large groups of non-modernists discovered that many old ‘orthodox’ points of

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denken in Nederland’, *Civis Mundi* XLVI.4 (2007), 165-168, there 165; Ter Borg, *Vrijzinnigen hebben de toekomst*, 96.

<sup>7</sup> Klooster, *Het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland*, 80, 99.

<sup>8</sup> “...een invloed die desastreus is geweest voor de traditionele vrijzinnige theologie.” Quoted from: Molendijk, ‘De vervluchting van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland’, 132.

<sup>9</sup> E.g.: [G. de Ru in:] ‘Dr. De Ru over verzoening: Gods “humanisme” van Buskes is een onbijbelse gedachte’, *Reformatorisch Dagblad* II.268 (15 February 1973), 2; ‘Kleine kroniek – “De strijd voor uw kerk is legitiem”’, *Gereformeerd Weekblad* LXXIV.20 (17 May 1973), 178-180, there 180; J. van der Graaf, ‘De huidige kerkelijke situatie 2’, *De Waarheidsvriend* LXI.22 (31 May 1973), 254-255, there 254; [K. Runia in:] J. Hoek, ‘Kleine kroniek – Wiersinga: vrijzinnig-gereformeerd’, *Gereformeerd Weekblad* XCIII.27 (3 July 1992), 433-434, there 434; J.M.D. de Heer, ‘Ruimzinnig de toekomst tegemoet’, *Reformatorisch Dagblad* XXIX.19 (23 April 1999), 19. See also: Van Driel, ‘Modernisme’, 226, 230-231.

view were superseded and that the churches could only survive by accepting a larger degree of subjective freedom and multiformity.”<sup>10</sup>

While liberal Protestantism has diminished in its institutional, ecclesial form, Ter Borg claims that the attitude of mind with which liberal Protestants approached theological matters has been adopted as a *general* attitude of mind by an ever-growing part of the Dutch population over the past fifty years.<sup>11</sup> In his words, this ‘*vrijzinnige*’ attitude of mind involves

tolerance with regard to every possible form of sensemaking, combined with faith in one’s own tradition – yet without making the significance of this tradition absolute. It means having an open mind on systems of sensemaking other than one’s own and being willing to weigh one’s own values against those of others – yet at the same time cherishing one’s own values.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, it implies having the readiness to “recognise the relativeness of dogmas, projections, stereotypes to which one can hold on to.”<sup>13</sup> Ter Borg’s definition characterises liberal Protestants’ theological position fairly well: they attached great value to the Christian, Protestant tradition to which they belonged, without identifying their *conceptions* of God as the only right ones. (I emphasise the word ‘*conceptions*’, meaning the imagery with which they tried to give expression to their interpretation of reality, as they did consider their religious *principles* to be superior.) It can also be argued that the attitude of mind Ter Borg labels as ‘*vrijzinnig*’ has indeed become dominant in society as of the 1960s, at least among policy makers and opinion leaders, those who set the tone in social life. Yet, should modernists be credited for that? This is in fact what Ter Borg suggests, seeing liberal Protestantism, as quoted above, “as the most successful current within Dutch Christianity.”

I disagree. Modernists’ influence in society was far too marginal to be credited with the breakthrough of the attitude of mind Ter Borg describes. Just as the emergence of theologically liberal tendencies within Protestant orthodoxy was the result of developments within orthodox theology itself, this breakthrough was the result of social dynamics, on which modernists, as I have shown in this study, actually failed to exert influence. More than that, this breakthrough was at best only a Pyrrhic victory for modernists. After all, it has not turned liberal Christianity into a leaven that permeates social life. Ter Borg repudiates this interpretation of modernist history as a Pyrrhic victory by claiming that it stems from the fallacy to identify modernists’ *vrijzinnige* attitude of mind with modernism as a theological current in Protestantism and the churches and institutions in which this current found its embodiment.<sup>14</sup> Liberal Protestants, Ter Borg argues, had only established institutions of their own because the process of pillarisation pressured them to do so. Accordingly, he claims that the process of *depillarisation*, beginning in the 1960s, has

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<sup>10</sup> “...de directe invloed van de vrijzinnigen...”; “...het feit dat ook grote groepen niet-vrijzinnigen ontdekten dat vele oude ‘rechtzinnige’ standpunten achterhaald waren en de kerken alleen konden overleven door een grotere mate van vrijheid en pluriformiteit binnen de kerken te accepteren.” Quoted from: Molendijk, ‘De vervluchting van het vrijzinnig protestantisme in Nederland’, 134.

<sup>11</sup> Ter Borg, ‘Vrijzinnigheid als mentaliteit’, 168; Ter Borg, *Vrijzinnigen hebben de toekomst*, 105.

<sup>12</sup> “...tolerantie ten aanzien van alle mogelijke vormen van zingeving, gecombineerd met een geloof in de eigen traditie. Maar dat dan weer zonder het belang van die traditie te verabsoluteren. Ze bestaat uit openheid naar vreemde zingevingssystemen toe en uit de bereidheid de eigen waarden af te wegen tegen die van anderen. Maar tegelijkertijd de eigen waarden te koesteren.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>13</sup> “...het relativeren van dogma’s, projecties, stereotypen waaraan men zijn houvast kan ontlelen.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 102. See also: Ter Borg, ‘Vrijzinnigheid als mentaliteit’, 166.

<sup>14</sup> Ter Borg, *Vrijzinnigen hebben de toekomst*, 96-98.

been a “blessing” for liberal Protestants. It caused the identification of the *vrijzinnige* attitude of mind with *vrijzinnige* institutions to disappear and enabled that attitude of mind “to fan out over nearly all currents and institutions based on a political or religious ideology.”<sup>15</sup> Ter Borg maintains that this was what modernists had hoped for, as “the difference between religious and non-religious liberals is only a nuance. What really matters to [them] is not their institutional manifestation, but their mentality.” That those who adopted a *vrijzinnige* attitude of mind as of the 1960s more often than not ceased to believe in God was therefore “not the end of the world” to liberal Protestants.<sup>16</sup> It is true that the latter considered institutionalisation to be nothing more than a necessary *evil*, but I disagree with the claim that they only cared about the generalisation of a certain attitude of mind disconnected from religious life. In fact, they were first and foremost concerned about religious life – consider, for example, the official aim of the NPB. What brought the modernist movement into being was the drive to preserve *Christianity* as a relevant social force in the age to come. In my opinion, Ter Borg disguises this to be able to interpret liberal Protestant history as a success after all.

The point I want to make here is that it is questionable to suggest that while the modernist movement failed to modernise Christianity and to permeate society with this modernised Christianity, modernists did succeed in getting some of their theological points of view accepted in orthodoxy and in getting the attitude of mind that characterised them in the sphere of theology adopted as the general attitude of mind in society. Besides the fact that this was not what modernists aimed for, their theological influence on orthodoxy and ideological influence in society, as I have tried to argue above, should not be exaggerated.

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<sup>15</sup> “...een geschenk...”; “...is uitgewaaid over bijna alle levensbeschouwelijke stromingen en instituties.” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 98-99.

<sup>16</sup> “Het verschil tussen religieuze vrijzinnigen en anderszins vrijzinnigen is slechts een nuance. Wat er werkelijk toe doet voor vrijzinnigen is niet de institutionele bedding, maar de mentaliteit.”; “...niet het einde...” Quoted from: *Ibid.*, 142.

## APPENDIX A

### Fact Sheet of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and *De Hervorming*

#### Explanation

# P	Number of pages	D	Mennonite ( <i>doopsgezind</i> )
# BIJ	Number of pages of the <i>Bijblad van De Hervorming</i>	L	Lutheran ( <i>evangelisch-luthers</i> )
# S	Number of subscriptions	NH	Dutch Reformed ( <i>Nederlands-hervormd</i> )
±	More or less #	R	Remonstrant ( <i>remonstrants</i> )
>	More than #		

#### Notes

On the next page, table cells that are left blank should be read as “”, meaning that they have the exact same content as the first cell that does have text above them.

Dutch Reformed minister B.C.J. Mosselmans, co-editor-in-chief of the *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad* and *De Hervorming* between November 1871 and December 1874, joined the Remonstrant Brotherhood in 1878.

Amsterdam-based publishing house Tj. van Holkema was renamed ‘Van Holkema & Warendorf’ in the colophon of *De Hervorming* in the issue of 30 May 1891.

#### Number of Pages and Subscriptions per Volume

Year	# P	# BIJ	# S	Year	# P	# BIJ	# S	Year	# P	# S	Year	# P	# S
1869	±208			1886	210	128	1,161 <sup>1</sup>	1903	416		1920	208	
1870	±208			1887	212	160		1904	424		1921	416	
1871	±208			1888	208	176	±1,000 <sup>4</sup>	1905	416		1922	416	
1872	±208			1889	210	144	±840 <sup>1</sup>	1906	416		1923	416	
1873	212			1890	208	128		1907	416		1924	416	±825 <sup>7</sup>
1874	212			1891	210	160		1908	416		1925	416	±775 <sup>7</sup>
1875	210		338 <sup>1</sup>	1892	214	176		1909	416		1926	416	
1876	214			1893	208	144		1910	424		1927	100	
1877	214		±600 <sup>2</sup>	1894	208	156		1911	420		1928	96	
1878	208			1895	208	144		1912	426		1929	88	
1879	210		±700 <sup>3</sup>	1896	208	96		1913	420		1930	88	
1880	212	±64		1897	208	80		1914	444		1931	94	
1881	212	±64		1898	214			1915	480	>900 <sup>1</sup>	1932	88	
1882	208	176		1899	216			1916	464		1933	88	
1883	212	144		1900	408		±800 <sup>1</sup>	1917	442	±850 <sup>5</sup>	1934	90	±600 <sup>1</sup>
1884	210	144	>800 <sup>1</sup>	1901	416			1918	208	±900 <sup>7</sup>			
1885	208	128		1902	416			1919	242	±1,700 <sup>6</sup>			

<sup>1</sup> Van Driel, “De Hervorming”.

<sup>2</sup> [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Zevende gewone algemeene vergadering van het Ned. Protestantenbond’, *De Hervorming* 1877-44 (3 November 1877), 3.

<sup>3</sup> [P.C. Evers in: F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], ‘Negende algemeene vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenbond’, *Ibid.* 1879-45 (8 November 1879), 177.

<sup>4</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], ‘Binnenland – “Nieuw Leven” en “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1888-47 (24 November 1888), 186-187, there 186.

<sup>5</sup> [H. de Lang], ‘Redactioneel – De plannen met ons blad’, *Ibid.* 1917-41 (13 October 1917), 339-340, there 339.

<sup>6</sup> A.H. van der Hoeve, ‘Bondsleven – “De Hervorming”-crisis’, *Ibid.* 1919-46 (15 November 1919), 208.

<sup>7</sup> H.T. de Graaf, ‘Ingezonden – “De Hervorming”’, *Ibid.* 1925-42 (17 October 1925), 332.

Date

Subtitle

Editor(s)-in-Chief

Freq.

Subscription Rate

Size

Publishing House, Location

Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad

28 JAN. 1869	-	J. van Loenen Martinet (NH) J.H.C. Heijse (L)	weekly	f 1.15 (3 months)	folio	I. de Haan, Krommenie
NOV. 1871		B.C.J. Mosselmans (NH [R]) J. van Gilse (D)				Erven B. van der Kamp, Groningen

De Hervorming

2 JAN. 1873	Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad	B.C.J. Mosselmans (NH [R]) J. van Gilse (D)	weekly	f 1.15 (3 months)	folio	Erven B. van der Kamp, Groningen
27 FEB. 1873				f 1.25 (3 months) f 2.40 (6 months)		
1 JAN. 1874	-	J. van Gilse (D)				
7 JAN. 1875		H.C. Lohr (L)		f 1.25 (3 months) f 2.13 (6 months) f 2.23 (6 months)		Van Hengel & Eeltjes, Rotterdam
11 NOV. 1875	Orgaan van het Nederlandsche Protestantenbond					
7 JAN. 1876		F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. (NH)		f 2.40 (6 months)		J.F.V. Behrns, Amsterdam
18 MAY 1876						
9 NOV. 1876						
6 JAN. 1877						
20 JAN. 1877	Orgaan van het Nederlandsch Protestantenbond	J. van Loenen Martinet (NH)				Van Holkema (& Warendorf), Amsterdam
16 NOV. 1878	Orgaan van den Nederlandschen Protestantenbond					
21 OCT. 1882					quarto	
3 OCT. 1885		H. de Lang (NH)				v/h Ellerman, Harms & Co., Amsterdam
12 NOV. 1887	Uitgegeven door den Nederlandschen Protestantenbond	H.T. de Graaf (NH) M.C. van Mourik Broekman (NH) K.F. Proost (NH) A.C. Schade van Westrum (L) A.H. van der Hoeve (NH)		f 2.50 (12 months)	folio	P.M. Wink, Zaltbommel
6 JAN. 1900						
3 JAN. 1914						
3 OCT. 1914						
5 JAN. 1918	Weekblad van den Nederlandschen Protestantenbond					
10 JAN. 1920				f 4.50 (12 months) f 4.70 (12 months) f 5.00 (12 months)	quarto	v/h Ellerman, Harms & Co., Amsterdam
17 JAN. 1920						Van Loghum Slaterus & Visser, Arnhem
5 FEB. 1921						v/h Gebr. Giuntia d'Albani, The Hague
7 JAN. 1922						
6 JAN. 1923						
3 JAN. 1925	Centraal orgaan van den Nederlandschen Protestantenbond	A.E.F. Junod (L)				
1 JAN. 1927			monthly	f 1.50 (12 months)		
7 JAN. 1928		D. Drijver (L)				

## APPENDIX B

### Numerical Development and List of Branches of the NPB

#### Explanation

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A	Branch ( <i>afdeling</i> )
C	Semi-branch ( <i>correspondentschap</i> )
?	Uncertainty about the existence of a (semi-)branch in a particular year
>	More than # members
±	More or less # members

#### Notes

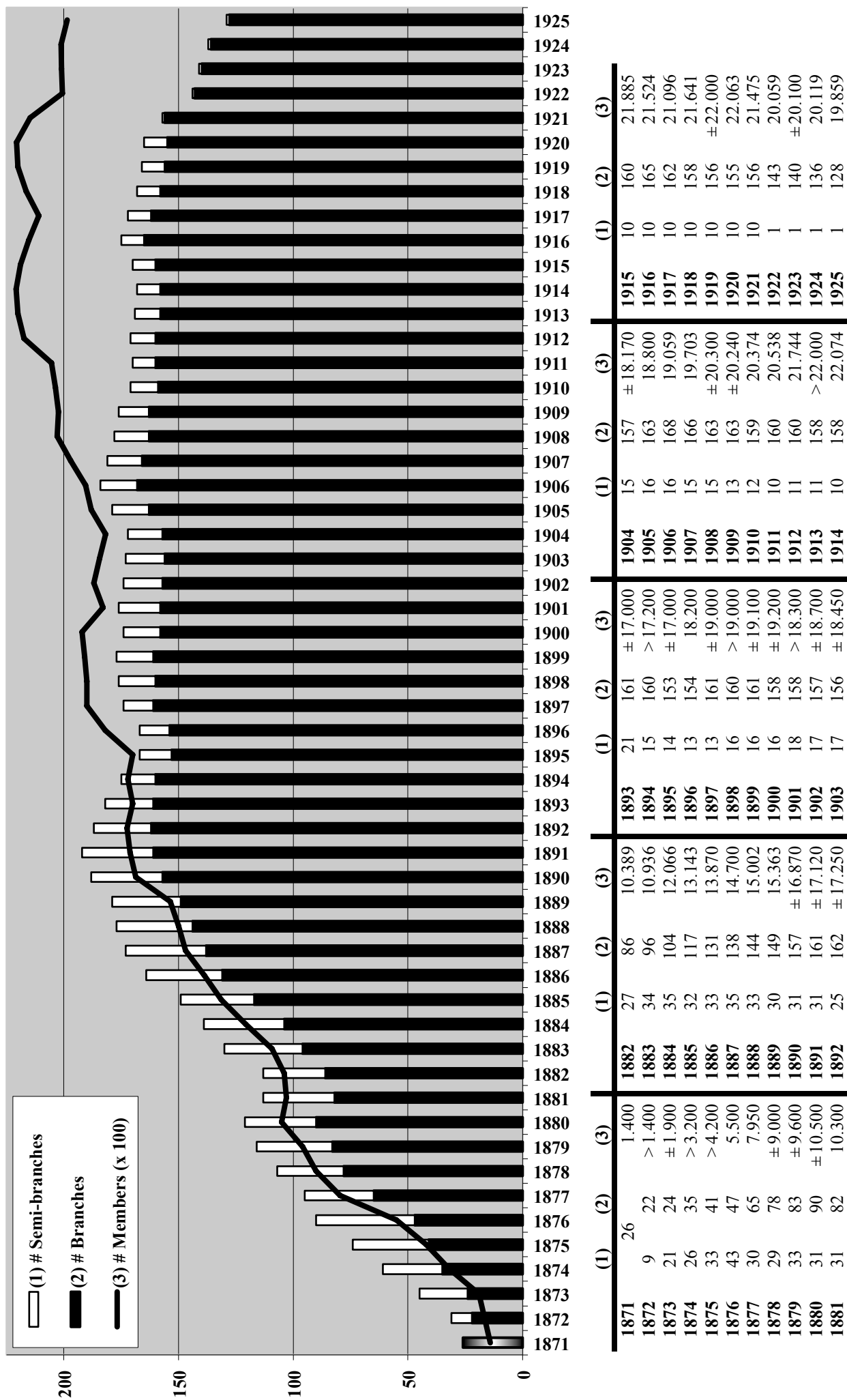
All data in this appendix are derived from the annual reports of the NPB. The data in the columns (1) and (2) have been obtained by counting all the branches and semi-branches mentioned in the appendices to the annual reports of the NPB. In many instances, these numbers slightly differ from the number of branches and semi-branches of which the national NPB secretaries make mention in the *text* of the annual reports.

In 1871, no distinction was made between branches and semi-branches. For that year, the columns (1) and (2) are therefore combined.

The last year that is included in this overview of the numerical development of the NPB is 1925, as both the number of branches and the number of members more or less stabilised afterwards. A significant numerical decline set in only in the 1960s.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Geloof in de N.P.B. Een ondogmatisch onderzoek naar bestaan en groei* (s.l. 1977), 74.



[illegible]



[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

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Oldehove		
Oldelamer e.o.		
Oldemarkt		
Oldenzaal		
Olist		
Ommelandervijk-Zuidwending		
Oosterdijk		
Oosterend c.a./op Texel		
Oosterhesselen		
Oostermeer e.o.		
Oosterwierum		
Oosterwolde		
Oosthuizen e.o.		
Oostwold (Oostwoldse ≤ 1893)		
Oostzaan		
Ossendrecht		
Oud-Beijerland		
Oude Pekela		
Oudeschild op Texel		
Oude Tonge		
Oudewater		
Oude Wetering		
Oudorp		
Oudshoorn		
Paramaribo (Suriname)		
Peperga e.o.		
Petten		
Pingjum		
Purmerend		
Puttershoek		
Rauwerderhem		
Renkum		
Rhenen		
Rijssen		
Rijswijk		
Rolde		
Roosendaal		
Rossum		
Rotterdam		
Rotterdam-Linkermaasoever		
Rouveen		
Ruinerwold		
Santpoort		
Sappemeer		
Sassenheim		
Schalsum		
Scherpenzeel (Friesland)		
Schiedam		

[illegible]

[illegible]

## APPENDIX C

### The Foreign Branches of the NPB

In addition to NPB-like associations and other liberal-minded Protestant groups and churches that existed outside the Netherlands, there were several branches of the NPB itself located abroad. This was made possible at F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.'s request. Feeling that the few liberal Protestants in the predominantly orthodox Reformed Dutch immigrant community in Grand Rapids could not do without support from the Netherlands, Hugenholtz wanted his Free Dutch Congregation in this Michigan town, the emergence of which has been dealt with in chapter 2, to align itself with the NPB. In order to inform the membership of the NPB and his own congregation about each other's ups and downs, he intended to regularly write letters to *De Hervorming* and created the *Stemmen uit de Vrije Hollandsche Gemeente te Grand Rapids* in 1886.<sup>1</sup> In order to establish formal interrelations, a year later he asked the general NPB assembly to incorporate his congregation into the framework of the NPB.<sup>2</sup> As the existence of branches outside of the Netherlands was not provided for in the NPB regulations, the assembly could only recognise the Free Dutch Congregation in Grand Rapids as a *bevriende corporatie* (foreign ally), putting it on a par with the *Protestantenverein* and similar associations abroad.<sup>3</sup> In 1889, after Hugenholtz had successfully insisted on statutory amendments, it was finally granted the status of an NPB branch.<sup>4</sup>

Hugenholtz had ambitious plans for the Free Dutch Congregation. What he basically envisioned was a modernist equivalent of the Salvation Army, albeit without the latter's militarist character and drive to convert people: he was determined to turn his congregation into a centre of 'practical Christianity', developing activities seven days a week. He wanted the members of his congregation to be social workers, devoting their lives to public welfare.<sup>5</sup> A first step to realising this was the founding of the association *Kennis en Kunst* (Knowledge and Art), which tried to foster cultural 'good taste' and to further general education, in 1887. A year later, Hugenholtz brought into being the association *De Willige Werkers* (The Willing Workers), comprising four separate divisions. The first of these divisions intended to convince all members of the Free Dutch Congregation of the necessity to show solidarity with the less fortunate. The second division was responsible for Sunday school work and for the organisation of discussion and reading groups. The third and fourth divisions aimed at doing what the Dutch *Vereeniging tot verspreiding van stichtelijke blaadjes* and *Maatschappij tot Nut van 't Algemeen* did: distributing spiritual reading for free, and eradicating social wrongs.<sup>6</sup> Impressed

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<sup>1</sup> [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Uit Grand Rapids', *De Hervorming* 1886-12 (20 March 1886), 47; 1886-14 (3 April 1886), 55. As early as 1889, however, Van Loenen Martinet remarked that Hugenholtz failed to keep his promise to write letters on a regular basis. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Uit Grand Rapids', *Ibid.* 1889-19 (11 May 1889), 74-75, there 74.

<sup>2</sup> Hugenholtz was particularly eager to get his congregation accepted as an NPB branch, because he argued that the NPB could help the Free Dutch Congregation in Grand Rapids in finding a new minister if he were to pass away or retire. See: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr. in:] *Verslag NPB 1888*, 20.

<sup>3</sup> *Verslag NPB 1887*, 29.

<sup>4</sup> *Verslag NPB 1889*, 42.

<sup>5</sup> Hugenholtz's ambitions were so great that Lutheran minister M.J. Mees even questioned whether he did not expect too much of his congregation. Mees feared that being a member of the Free Dutch Congregation would be a full-time job. See: M.J. Mees, 'Ingezonden stukken', *De Hervorming* 1888-32 (11 August 1888), 127-128, there 127.

<sup>6</sup> W. Langerwey, 'Voices from the Free Congregation at Grand Rapids, Michigan. An Introduction to the Holland Unitarian Church 1885-1918', in: T.J. Broos (ed.), *Publications of the American Association for Netherlandic Stu-*



by Hugenholtz's zest for work, Van Loenen Martinet depicted the Free Dutch Congregation as "a complete Dutch society in an American environment."<sup>7</sup>

However, the Dutch character of that 'society' would soon fade away.<sup>8</sup> In 1887, the Western Unitarian Conference accepted Hugenholtz as a Unitarian minister and recognised his congregation in Grand Rapids as 'The First Unitarian Holland Church in the United States.'<sup>9</sup> As a result, the congregation became more and more integrated with American Unitarian church life. From 1889 onwards, Hugenholtz began to preach in English, which was extremely early in comparison to the older congregations of Dutch orthodox Calvinist immigrants in America. Some of the latter would still use Dutch as their liturgical language as late as the 1930s.<sup>10</sup> In addition, Hugenholtz started to occasionally lead religious services in Unitarian congregations. After 1890, the Free Dutch Congregation only 'Americanised', but also declined in numbers.<sup>11</sup> One of the causes of this decline was Hugenholtz's development in a politically socialist direction, which he did not obscure in his sermons. How radical his political views were is illustrated by his feeling that even Henry George, whom he had invited to lecture in Grand Rapids sometime in the late 1880s, did not go far enough in calling for social reforms.<sup>12</sup> The tensions arising from Hugenholtz's political persuasion ultimately had a devastating effect.<sup>13</sup> Another cause of the decline of the congregation was its integration with the Unitarian community at large: the offspring of Dutch liberal Protestant immigrants did not feel the need to join a congregation with a particular Dutch character and joined non-ethnic Unitarian congregations instead.<sup>14</sup> After Hugenholtz's death, in 1899, the Free Dutch Congregation was led by B.A. van Sluyters (1866-?) until 1916 and K. Oosterhuis (1889-?) from 1916 to 1918. During the latter's period as a minister, it turned out that sermons with a political message were still highly controversial. Preaching against American involvement in the First World War, Oosterhuis was forced to resign, as the majority

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dies. *Papers from the Third Interdisciplinary Conference on Netherlandic Studies, held at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 12-14 June 1986* (Boston and London 1988), 132-133; F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Van over zee – Uit Grand Rapids', *De Hervorming* 1888-30 (28 July 1888), 119-120, there 120.

<sup>7</sup> "...een volledige Hollandsche maatschappij te midden eener Amerikaansche omgeving." Quoted from: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Uit Grand Rapids', *Ibid.* 1888-46 (17 November 1888), 183.

<sup>8</sup> The bonds with the Netherlands became loose to such an extent that the members of the Free Dutch Congregation had to make clear that they still wanted to be considered as NPB members in 1902. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Het jaarverslag', *Ibid.* 1902-38 (20 September 1902), 301.

<sup>9</sup> A. Baxter, *History of the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan* (New York 1891), 348.

<sup>10</sup> F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr., 'Van over zee – Brief van F.W.N. Hugenholtz te Grand Rapids', *De Hervorming* 1889-45 (9 November 1889), 180-181. Dutch orthodox Calvinist immigrants in North America continued to use Dutch as their liturgical language, because they felt that English lacked the words to give adequate expression to their inner lives. See: N. van der Sijs, *Yankees, cookies en dollars. De invloed van het Nederlands op de Noord-Amerikaanse talen* (Amsterdam 2009), 76.

<sup>11</sup> It had 316 members in late 1889. See: J. van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America. A Study of Emigration and Settlement in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries in the United States of America I* (Grand Rapids 1985), 453.

<sup>12</sup> Langerwey, 'Voices from the Free Congregation at Grand Rapids', 129-130.

<sup>13</sup> I. van den Bergh, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond – De buitenlandsche afdeeling te Grand Rapids', *De Hervorming* 1892-53 (31 December 1892), 212-213, there 212. Hugenholtz might have introduced George's ideas to Van Loenen Martinet. In his plea against private landownership, the latter referred to an article on George published in Hugenholtz's *Zondagsblad* (*Sunday Paper*). See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'De private grondeigendom voor de rechtbank van godsdienst en zedelijkheid', *Ibid.* 1892-26 (25 June 1892), 101-102, there 101. The *Zondagsblad*, issued between 1891 and 1893, was the successor to the *Stemmen*. Mentioned in: Langerwey, 'Voices from the Free Congregation at Grand Rapids', 127.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

of his congregation did not share his socialist-pacifist views.<sup>15</sup> After his resignation, the Free Dutch Congregation, the membership of which had steadily decreased in the preceding decades, fell apart.<sup>16</sup>

Next to Grand Rapids, Dutch liberal Protestants who had migrated to the United States had also settled in the nearby Michigan town of Kalamazoo, Chicago, Orange City in the state of Iowa, and Castalia in the state of South Dakota.<sup>17</sup> Of the attempts to found other Dutch modernist congregations outside of Grand Rapids, only the one in Chicago succeeded; there, with Hugenholtz's assistance, some sixty liberal Protestant Dutchmen and Dutchwomen instituted a second Free Dutch Congregation in 1889.<sup>18</sup> However, they did not seem to have followed Hugenholtz in establishing any formal contacts with the NPB.

Six Dutch liberal Protestants living in Paramaribo, the capital of the Dutch colony of Surinam, did make use of the precedent provided by the incorporation of the congregation in Grand Rapids into the NPB. They were in need of more supporters to set up a branch in the proper sense, but NPB regulations did give them the possibility of establishing a so-called '*correspondentschap*' (a circle with which the NPB kept in touch) – which they probably did in 1893, as the minutes of the general assembly held in that year are the first to make mention of it. According to these same minutes, H.H. Zaalberg (1843-1912), who served both the Dutch Reformed and Lutheran congregations in Paramaribo, was the chairman of this circle.<sup>19</sup> Its development is veiled in mist. There are no sources that refer to the Paramaribo circle in any way, except for the lists of branches and circles that were published annually as an appendix to the

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<sup>15</sup> Just as Oosterhuis, some liberal Protestant ministers in the Netherlands championed refusal of military service and (unilateral) disarmament before and during the First World War. By so doing, they equally caused controversy. See, e.g.: [H. de Lang], 'Redactioneel – Landsverdediging', *De Hervorming* 1914-44 (31 October 1914), 375-376; C.E. Hooykaas, 'De kreet der weerloosheid', *Ibid.* 1915-06 (6 February 1915), 46-48; 'Ingezonden – Manifest', *Ibid.* 1915-38 (18 September 1915), 338; L. Knappert, 'Ingezonden – Het Manifest der dienstweigeraars', *Ibid.* 1915-39 (25 September 1915), 346; J.G.C. Joosting, 'Ingezonden – Het Manifest', *Ibid.* 1915-39 (25 September 1915), 347; M.C. van Wijhe, 'Ingezonden – Het Dienstweigerings-Manifest', *Ibid.* 1915-44 (30 October 1915), 396-397; A. Jager, 'Het zwaartepunt inzake oorlogsbeschouwing', *Ibid.* 1915-46 (13 November 1915), 413-414.

<sup>16</sup> Langerwey, 'Voices from the Free Congregation at Grand Rapids', 134-135.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>18</sup> 'Plaatselijk nieuws – Kerknieuws', *De Grondwet* XXIX.39 (28 May 1889), 5; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – De tweede vrije Hollandsche gemeente in de Vereenigde Staten', *De Hervorming* 1889-31 (3 August 1889), 123; [P.H. Hugenholtz, Jr. in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Voor onze vrienden in Amerika', *Ibid.* 1890-13 (29 March 1890), 51; Van Hinte, *Netherlanders in America*, 453. In 1886, Hugenholtz had doubted whether the number of modernist-minded Dutch inhabitants of Chicago was big enough to found and preserve a congregation. See: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Wat goeds ik in Chicago vond', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Hollandsche Gemeente te Grand Rapids* I (1886), 324-334, there 331. It is unclear when this congregation ceased to exist. Attempts to found free congregations in the town of Kalamazoo and somewhere in Dakota (probably Castalia) failed. See: [A.D. Franssens in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Een tweede Vrije Gemeente in opkomst', *De Hervorming* 1887-16 (16 April 1887), 63; H.S. Lucas, *Netherlanders in America. Dutch Immigration to the United States and Canada, 1789-1950* (Ann Arbor 1955), 519. The name of Hugenholtz's magazine accordingly changed to '*Stemmen uit de Vrije Hollandsche Gemeenten in Amerika*'. See: [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'Van de redacteursstafel', *Stemmen uit de Vrije Hollandsche Gemeente* IV.7 (July 1889), 78.

<sup>19</sup> Some sources mention that Zaalberg was a minister in the Lutheran congregation between 1888 and 1901. See, e.g.: 'Stadsnieuws – Ds. H.H. Zaalberg †', *Het Nieuws van den Dag* 1912-13 191 (10 December 1912), 7; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'H.H. Zaalberg †', *De Hervorming* 1912-50 (14 December 1912), 405. Yet, others state that he served the Dutch Reformed congregation in Paramaribo in these same years. See, e.g.: 'Nederland – Begrafenis ds. H.H. Zaalberg', *De West* IV.348 (14 January 1913), 2; M. Bremmer, 'De ongefuseerde Hervormde Kerk van Paramaribo', *Reformatorisch Dagblad* XXXIV.166 (14 October 2004), 2. This last source even mentions that Zaalberg is honoured with a commemorative tablet in the Dutch Reformed congregation. Zaalberg thus must have served both congregations at the same time. See also: Fafié, 'Van het revolutiejaar tot het begin van de Eerste Wereldoorlog', 555.

minutes of the general NPB assemblies.<sup>20</sup> Those lists demonstrate that Zaalberg was succeeded as the chairman of this circle by H.K.S.Ph. Begemann (1850-1937), who also succeeded him as a minister in the local Dutch Reformed congregation, in 1902 and 1903, and that C. Hoekstra (1851-1911), Zaalberg's successor as a minister in the local Lutheran congregation, chaired the circle between 1904 and 1906. Although it continued to be included in the lists of NPB branches and circles until 1921, there are reasons to assume that the Paramaribo circle stopped existing far earlier. After all, it is odd that none of the lists published between 1907 and 1921 mentions who its chairman was. Equally odd is that its number of members continued to be six between 1893 and 1921. If anything can be said with certainty about the Paramaribo circle, it is that there apparently was no massive interest in joining the NPB among liberal Protestants in Surinam. The circumstance that both the local Dutch Reformed and Lutheran congregations were known to be modernist-oriented will have most likely been responsible for this.<sup>21</sup>

As mentioned in chapter 10, a fully-fledged branch did come into being in Batavia, present-day Jakarta, in 1905. The driving force behind its founding was A.S. Carpentier Alting, who had been one of the founding fathers of the *Protestantenbond* in 1870 and had served several Protestant congregations in the Dutch East Indies as of 1885.<sup>22</sup> In NPB circles, religious life and church life in the East Indies were looked upon rather unfavourably: among ethnic Dutchmen and Dutchwoman, a spirit of religious indifference was said to prevail, while the Protestant Church, founded by the Dutch government in 1844 to encompass all Calvinists and Lutherans of European descent, was blamed for lacking the zeal to counteract this indifference.<sup>23</sup> In the Dutch modernist movement, the hope was cherished that the NPB might bring about a religious revival in the East Indies. An attempt to open an NPB branch there in 1885 failed, but when a growing number of orthodox ministers were appointed to the Protestant Church in the 1890s, liberal Protestants could no longer afford to reconcile themselves to this failure.<sup>24</sup> Before returning to the Netherlands, Carpentier Alting therefore established an NPB branch in the capital of the Dutch East Indies. Back in the Netherlands, he incited his fellow modernists to structurally engage themselves in activities in the Indies. In order to interest modernist ministers in going

<sup>20</sup> Even *De Hervorming* did not refer to it once.

<sup>21</sup> J. Bakker, *Oecumene als praktijk en probleem. Een vergelijkende sociologische beschouwing van hervormd-gereformeerde verhoudingen in Nieuw-Guinea en Nederland* (Meppel 1970), 224.

<sup>22</sup> Bakhuizen van den Brink, 'Levensbericht van Albertus Samuel Carpentier Alting', 123-124. In 1905, he became the pastor of the NPB branch in The Hague. See: J.J. Kalma, 'Carpentier Alting, Albertus Samuel', in: D. Nauta et al. (eds.), *BLGNP III* (Kampen 1988), 72-73, there 72.

<sup>23</sup> E.g.: J. de Jong, 'Een brief uit Indië', *De Hervorming* 1873-40 (2 October 1873), 2; [F.W.N. Hugenholtz, Sr.], 'De oorzaken van de onkerkelijkheid onzer dagen', *Ibid.* 1877-34 (25 August 1877), 1-2, there 1; 1877-37 (15 September 1877), 1-2, there 2; 'Binnenland – Depok', *Ibid.* 1879-36 (6 September 1879), 143; V.H., 'Ik ga visschen', *Ibid.* 1883-31 (4 August 1883), 121-122, there 122; J. de Jong, 'Binnenland – Oost-Indische toestanden op kerkelijk gebied', *Ibid.* 1884-05 (2 February 1884), 19; V.d.Z., 'De minister Keuchenius, de Indische Kerk en de Synodale Commissie', *Ibid.* 1889-31 (3 August 1889), 122; C. Rogge, 'De Protestantsche Kerk in Nederlandsch-Indië', *Ibid.* 1891-39 (26 September 1891), 155-156, there 155; 1892-32 (6 August 1892), 125-126; X., 'Brieven van een hulpprediker in N.-Indië', *Ibid.* 1893-14 (8 April 1893), 54; 'Binnenland – Uit Salatiga', *Ibid.* 1895-06 (9 February 1895), 23-24, there 23; H. de Lang, 'Dr. W. van Lingem', *Ibid.* 1901-02 (12 January 1901), 10-11, there 10; Delius, 'Uit Indië', *Ibid.* 1906-21 (26 May 1906), 163; A.S. Carpentier Alting, "'De Protestantsche Kerk in Ned. Oost-Indië'", *Ibid.* 1911-41 (14 October 1911), 322-323, there 322.

<sup>24</sup> J. Bruinwold Riedel, 'Nederlandsche Protestantenbond', *Ibid.* 1885-17 (25 April 1885), 66; [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – De Protestantenbond in Ned.-Indië', *Ibid.* 1905-42 (21 October 1905), 333. The modernist *Blaadjesvereeniging* already had branches in the East Indies, as well as in the Dutch West Indies. See: [J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Binnenland – Vereeniging tot verspreiding van stichtelijke blaadjes', *Ibid.* 1899-15 (15 April 1899), 58.

to the East Indies and making propaganda for liberal Protestantism, he successfully persuaded the NPB to install a 'Commission for the East Indies', the activities and ultimate dissolution of which have been discussed in chapter 10.<sup>25</sup> This commission basically made the existence of a separate branch in Batavia unnecessary: it was included in the list of NPB branches and circles for the last time in 1918.<sup>26</sup>

A last foreign NPB branch was founded in Paris. As of the early 1930s, religious services in the Dutch language were held in the French capital. However, these services, as well as those held in nearby congregations of the *Église Réformée de France*, had an orthodox character and hence could not satisfy liberal-minded Dutch Protestants.<sup>27</sup> As an alternative to church life in Paris and its environs, these liberal-minded Protestants tried to listen to the VPRO, but the reception of radio programmes broadcast from the Netherlands was often poor. In 1938, one of them therefore requested the then chairwoman and secretary of the VPRO, Nicolette Bruining and Everhard Spelberg respectively, to come to their aid. Spelberg passed the request on to the NPB, which found H. Faber (1907-2001), pastor of the NPB branch in Schiedam, ready to conduct a first Dutch-language liberal Protestant service in Paris on 12 February 1939. In a meeting held the next day, Faber advised the twenty-one Dutchmen and Dutchwomen present not to institute a separate congregation, but to make use of the possibility the NPB offered to establish branches abroad. And so they did.<sup>28</sup> Although they cherished this hope, it quickly proved to be too complicated to reinstitute the NPB branch in Paris as an 'annex' to the Dutch Austin Friars Church in London.<sup>29</sup> This congregation had been founded in 1550 to hold Dutch-language services for Calvinist refugees persecuted by the then Spanish rulers of the Netherlands and, after the proclamation of the Dutch Republic, for Dutch Reformed merchants and immigrants living in London. From the late nineteenth century onwards, it was known to have a modernist character. Its first minister with a modernist orientation, serving the congregation between 1874 and 1901, was A.D. Adama van Scheltema (1842-1903). His successor, staying until 1928, was S. Baart de la Faille (1871-1943), who introduced the modernist *Leiden* translation of the Bible and the hymnbook of the *Protestantenbond* in the Austin Friars Church. The last minister of a markedly modernist persuasion, working in London from 1929 until 1946, was J. van Dorp (1887-1949), who could be regularly heard in VPRO broadcasts, and who organised a conference in collaboration with the executive board of the NPB in 1934.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, the Austin Friars Church was represented

<sup>25</sup> [A.S. Carpentier Alting in: J. van Loenen Martinet], 'Berichten, enz. – Vergadering van moderne theologen', *Ibid.* 1906-15 (14 April 1906), 116; [A. Rutgers van der Loeff in:] 'Berichten, enz. – Te Alkmaar', *Ibid.* 1913-45 (8 November 1913), 357-358, there 357; M.H. Schippers, 'Redactioneel – In memoriam ds. A.S. Carpentier Alting', *Ibid.* 1915-33 (14 August 1915), 288-289.

<sup>26</sup> *Jaarboek NPB 1918*, 146.

<sup>27</sup> Out of these services, an independent congregation, targeting members of the Dutch Reformed Church and the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands living in Paris, emerged in 1944. In 1948, this congregation was integrated into the framework of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands. See: T.E.M. Krijger, *Tot in 't verste oord, trouw aan 's Heren Woord. De totstandkoming, uitbouw en identiteitsontwikkeling van de sedert de vorming van de Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (1892) tot deze denominatie behorende gemeenten in Nederland, België, Argentinië, Brazilië, Frankrijk, Groot-Brittannië en Nederlands West-Indië* [unpublished thesis, Utrecht University, 2011], 161-162, note 900.

<sup>28</sup> Bruinenberg and Van der Poel, *50 jaar afdeling Parijs*, 3-4; Van der Poel, *Vous êtes à l'écoute...*, 30-31.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>30</sup> J. Lindeboom, *Austin Friars. History of the Dutch Reformed Church in London 1550-1950* (The Hague 1950), 82; K.E. Sluyterman, *Kerk in de City. 450 jaar Nederlandse Kerk Austin Friars in Londen* (Hilversum 2000), 27-37.

in the CC.<sup>31</sup> Equally modernist-oriented at the time was the Dutch Church in Saint Petersburg, existing between 1717 and 1927 on behalf of Reformed fishermen and tradesmen. Its last two ministers, H.A. Gillot (1838-1916), standing on its pulpit between 1873 and 1902, and H.P. Schim van der Loeff, inducted in 1914 and forced to leave the Soviet Union in 1920, were modernists.<sup>32</sup> Around 1900, one of its members even exclaimed that the fate of liberal Protestantism in Russia depended on the Dutch congregation in Saint Petersburg.<sup>33</sup> Notwithstanding their Dutch and Reformed character, the congregations in London and Saint Petersburg did not formally belong to the Dutch Reformed Church. Although they were not officially affiliated with the NPB either, the *Protestantenbond* did feel highly involved in their affairs.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Mentioned in: M.C. van Mourik Broekman et al., 'Berichten en mededeelingen', *De Hervorming* 1933-05 (27 May 1933), 39.

<sup>32</sup> P.N. Holtrop, 'Dutch and Reformed in St. Petersburg', in: P.N. Holtrop and C.H. Slechte (eds.), *Foreign Churches in St. Petersburg and Their Archives, 1703-1917* (Leiden and Boston 2007), 83-95, there 93; Th.J.S. van Staalduine, 'The Lost Battle of the Last Chairman. François Schmitt and the Decline of the Dutch Reformed Community in St. Petersburg, 1920-27', in: *Ibid.*, 97-110, there 98. Schim van der Loeff was a Remonstrant, due to which the regulation of the congregation that only Dutch Reformed ministers were allowed to climb its pulpit, had to be modified. See: J.S. van Wijngaarden-Xiounina, *Van assimilatie tot segregatie. De Nederlandse kolonie in Sint-Petersburg, 1856-1917* (Groningen 2011), 108.

<sup>33</sup> E. Engberts, *Herinneringen aan Rusland* (Amsterdam 2004), 73-74.

<sup>34</sup> An example thereof is that *De Hervorming* regularly paid attention to them.

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*Ernst en Vrede. Maandschrift voor de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk*  
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*Geloof en Vrijheid. Tweemaandelijksch tijdschrift*  
*Gereformeerd Weekblad (NHK)*  
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*Groninger Courant. Algemeen dagblad voor de stad en provincie Groningen*  
*Haagsche Courant*  
*Haarlems Dagblad*  
*Handelingen der Algemeene Synode van de Nederlandsche Hervormde Kerk [Handelingen NHK]*  
*Handelingen van de ... Algemeene Vergadering van den Nederlandschen Protestantenvbond en Kort Verslag van den Staat en de Werkzaamheden van den Bond en zijne Commissiën [Handelingen NPB]*  
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*Het Nieuwe Leven*  
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*Onze Godsdienstprediking*  
*Onze Wachter. Vrijzinnig godsdienstig maandblad, tevens orgaan van de Vereeniging van Vrijzinnig-  
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*Sumatra-courant. Nieuws-, handels- en advertentieblad*  
*Taal des Geloofs. Godsdienstige toespraken*  
*Taalkundig Magazijn of gemengde bijdragen tot de kennis der Nederduitsche taal*  
*The Biblical World*  
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## NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING (SUMMARY IN DUTCH)

### Een tweede Hervorming?

Het Nederlandse vrijzinnig-protestantisme in het godsdienstig, maatschappelijk en staatkundig leven, 1870-1940

#### Inleiding

‘Een tweede Hervorming.’ Met dit zelfbeeld voor ogen diende de moderne of vrijzinnige richting zich vanaf de late jaren vijftig van de negentiende eeuw in het Nederlandse protestantisme aan. De eerste generatie ‘moderneren’ of ‘vrijzinnigen’ leefde in de verwachting dat de toekomst, in kerk, staat en maatschappij, aan haar was. Zij werd gedreven door een tweeledige overtuiging. In de eerste plaats meende zij dat het christendom inwendig en uitwendig ‘gemoderniseerd’ diende te worden om het ook in de toekomstige tijd relevant te laten zijn. Een gemoderniseerd christendom zou volledig ontdaan zijn van geloofsopvattingen, beeldentaal en rituelen die door veranderde wetenschappelijke inzichten in verstandelijk opzicht niet langer voldeden, en die niet uit het gemoedsleven van de individuele gelovige voortkwamen. Daarmee samenhangend, zou het zijn voorzien van een nieuw vormgegeven godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven op niet-dogmatische grondslag. In de tweede plaats oordeelde de eerste generatie moderneren dat de moderne samenleving met dit gemoderniseerde christendom zou moeten worden doordeesemd om de voleinding van het Koninkrijk Gods te bespoedigen. Strevend naar de verwezenlijking daarvan, beschouwde zij zich als een voorhoede die voor de troepen uitliep, waartegen de orthodoxie in haar rooms-katholieke en protestantse gedaante het onvermijdelijk zou afleggen. Het vrijzinnig-protestantisme is echter nooit uitgegroeid tot een massabeweging, en sinds het vierde kwart van de negentiende eeuw in het kerkelijk, maatschappelijk en staatkundig leven zelfs meer en meer in een positie aan de zijlijn terechtgekomen.

Voor deze gestage neergang worden in de historiografie veelal de volgende verklaringen aangedragen: als stroming in de theologie zou het vrijzinnig-protestantisme te kritisch ten aanzien van de christelijke traditie, te intellectualistisch en te vaag zijn geweest om aan apostasie en orthodoxie tegenwicht te bieden, terwijl het als beweging in kerk en maatschappij door een gebrek aan organisatie tegenover beter georganiseerde groepen het onderspit heeft moeten delven. Deze verklaringen suggereren dat de moderne richting meer aanhang en invloed zou hebben gehad, of in ieder geval de potentie daartoe zou hebben gehad, indien zij theologisch scherper belijnd ofwel beter georganiseerd zou zijn geweest. Deze studie bestrijdt dat.

Deze studie omvat, ruwweg, de decennia tussen 1870 en 1940. Dat de groei van de moderne richting stokte, kwam naar voren in de jaren zeventig van de negentiende eeuw, toen de effecten van het algemeen mannenstemrecht in ambtsdragersverkiezingen dat in 1867 was ingevoerd in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk (het grootste protestantse kerkverband in Nederland en als zodanig het kerkverband waartoe de meeste moderneren behoorden), steeds duidelijker werden. In 1870 kwam bovendien de Nederlandse Protestantenvbond (NPB) tot stand, die, als vereniging waarin moderneren uit verschillende kerkverbanden en niet-kerkelijke moderneren elkaar ontmoetten, spoedig in het centrum van de moderne richting kwam te staan. Daarnaast situeert de historiografie rond 1870 het begin van een proces van modernisering in Nederland, tegen de achtergrond waarvan het vrijzinnige streven naar een gemoderniseerd christendom en een van dit gemoderniseerde

christendom doordesemde samenleving vorm kreeg. Het jaar 1940 is niet alleen een ‘natuurlijk’ eindpunt omdat Nederland toen betrokken raakte in de Tweede Wereldoorlog, maar ook omdat de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk nadien zozeer transformeerde dat haar vrijzinnige vleugel met een geheel nieuwe situatie werd geconfronteerd. Ten slotte vallen de decennia tussen 1870 en 1940 min of meer samen met de periode waarin het vrijzinnige opinietijdschrift *De Hervorming* werd uitgegeven.

*De Hervorming* verscheen vanaf 1873 als voortzetting van het in 1869 opgerichte *Nieuw Kerkelijk Weekblad*. Het tijdschrift kwam eind 1875 in handen van de NPB en bleef tot zijn opheffing eind 1934, na in 1927 van een week- in een maandblad te zijn getransformeerd, aan deze vereniging verbonden. De NPB was – en is; de bond leeft als ‘*Vrijzinnigen Nederland*’ tot op de dag van vandaag voort – wat in de sociologie een ‘verbeelde gemeenschap’ heet: lidmaatschap van de bond bood de mogelijkheid tot identificatie met een groep van gelijkgezinden die elkaar in meerderheid niet persoonlijk kenden, maar, op grond van (vermeende) gedeelde eigenschappen, toch het gevoel hadden bij elkaar te horen. De NPB belichaamde het interkerkelijke (en deels buitenkerkelijke) karakter van de vrijzinnigheid en stond als zodanig in het centrum van de moderne richting, maar kon lang niet allen die zich met deze richting identificeerden, tot zijn leden rekenen. Niettemin biedt de NPB hét aanknopingspunt voor onderzoek naar de volle breedte van het vrijzinnig-protestantisme in de voornoemde periode, en wel in zijn hoedanigheid van uitgever van *De Hervorming*.

Wie de ontwikkelingsgang van een bepaalde richting, zoals de moderne, in het negentiende- en twintigste-eeuwse Nederlandse protestantisme wil bestuderen, ziet zich gesteld voor een moeilijkheid. De grenzen tussen richtingen waren namelijk veelal vloeïend. Richtingen vielen bovendien niet volledig samen met één verbeelde gemeenschap; aanhangers van de moderne richting, bijvoorbeeld, waren verspreid over diverse kerkverbanden en parakerkelijke verenigingen (gelijktijdig lidmaatschap van een kerk en een parakerkelijke vereniging, zoals de NPB, kwam ook voor), terwijl sommigen bij geen enkele organisatie waren aangesloten. Om de moderne richting toch in haar volle breedte te kunnen vatten, dient zij te worden benaderd als een ‘vertooggemeenschap’. De idee achter dit concept is dat individuen als een *collectief* zichtbaar worden door het gedeelde medium waarvan zij zich bedienen om zich te uiten. In vrijzinnige kring fungeerde *De Hervorming* als dit gedeelde medium: doordat de NPB een aanhang had waarin alle schakeringen binnen de moderne richting waren vertegenwoordigd, en vrijwel alle moderne theologen en predikanten van naam op enigerlei wijze bij de NPB waren betrokken, kwamen alle stemmen die zich in de moderne richting roerden, in de bondsperiodiek tot uiting. Om die reden heeft een integrale, systematische analyse van *De Hervorming* aan de basis gelegen van het onderzoek waarvan deze studie het resultaat is. Dit onderzoek is uitgebreid met andere tijdschriften die in vrijzinnige kring zijn verschenen, alsmede andersoortig primair bronnenmateriaal en secundaire literatuur.

Door de moderne richting als een vertooggemeenschap te benaderen, en de vrijzinnig-protestantse pers aan een kritische analyse te onderwerpen, verdedigt deze studie een tweeledige stelling. In de eerste plaats was de kerkelijke en maatschappelijke hervormingsgezindheid in vrijzinnige kring minder groot dan zou mogen worden verwacht op grond van de pretenties waarmee de moderne richting zich aandiende. In de tweede plaats was aan de moderne richting een burgerlijk karakter inherent, dat zich vertaalde in een dominant discours dat buiten een deel van

de burgerij (degenen die behoorden tot de middelste of bovenste laag van de middenklasse of tot de bovenklasse, én zich identificeerden met een ‘burgerlijk’ cultuurpatroon) geen weerklank vond.

### **Deel I: De moderne richting**

Het vrijzinnig-protestantisme staat in een lange traditie van stromingen die, vooral waar het de christologie, sacramentsleer en hermeneutiek betreft, afwijken van wat bij hun ontstaan in het (Westers) christendom algemeen voor waar werd gehouden. Hoewel in eigen kring wel is betoogd dat ‘vrijzinnigheid’ ouder is dan het protestantisme of zelfs ouder dan het christendom zelf, kan voor het eerst met recht vanaf het tweede kwart van de negentiende eeuw over vrijzinnig-protestantisme worden gesproken. Vanaf dat moment kwam het zogeheten historisch-kritisch bijbelonderzoek tot ontwikkeling en bloei. Gebruikmakend van innovatieve onderzoeksmethodes en -resultaten uit het brede spectrum van de geesteswetenschappen en contemporaine natuurwetenschappelijke theorieën, is dit historisch-kritisch bijbelonderzoek kenmerkend voor theologiebeoefening die de naam ‘modern’ of ‘vrijzinnig’ draagt. Andere kenmerken van moderne theologie, althans in haar oorspronkelijke gedaante, zijn antisupranaturalisme of de ontkenning van een ‘bovennatuurlijke’ inwerking op de aardse realiteit, een beeld van de historische Jezus van Nazareth zonder middelaarsstatus, een optimistisch mensbeeld, een sterk vooruitgangdenken en aandacht voor vergelijkende godsdienstwetenschap. Vanaf het einde van de jaren vijftig van de negentiende eeuw traden de eerste studenten die in de moderne theologie waren onderwezen, tot de predikantenstand toe. Door toedoen van hun prediking ontstond, naast de moderne theologie, een bredere ‘moderne richting’, die op felle orthodoxe weerstand stuitte en in 1870 in de NPB haar concentratiepunt kreeg. De NPB stelde zichzelf ten doel alle obstakels die een ‘vrije ontwikkeling van het godsdienstig leven, zowel binnen de kring der kerkgenootschappen als daarbuiten’ in de weg stonden, te bestrijden. Alles wat de bovengenoemde modernisering van het christendom en doorwerking van dat gemoderniseerde christendom in de maatschappij verhinderde, zoals kerkelijke belijdenisdwang en letterknechterij, maar ook een gebrekkige intellectuele ontwikkeling en sociale misstanden, wenste de NPB, met andere woorden, niet te dulden.

Het opinietijdschrift van de NPB, *De Hervorming*, was lange tijd het belangrijkste platform waarop vrijzinnige predikanten en, in minder mate, moderngezinde gemeenteleden opinies over uiteenlopende onderwerpen uitwisselden. Geen enkel ander tijdschrift in vrijzinnige kring heeft een verschijningsperiode gekend die ook maar enigszins in de buurt komt van de tweeënzestig jaren waarin *De Hervorming* is verschenen. Door zijn binding aan de NPB, gaf het blad bovendien een representatieve dwarsdoorsnede te zien van wat er in de volle breedte van de moderne richting werd gedacht en gedaan. *De Hervorming* is echter niet alleen een ‘spiegel’ van de ontwikkelingsgang van het Nederlandse vrijzinnig-protestantisme tot in het late Interbellum geweest; het blad heeft die ontwikkelingsgang ook zelf beïnvloed. Het droeg in vrijzinnige kring bij aan ‘sociabiliteit’, oftewel, concreter gesteld, aan een gevoel van urgentie om actuele kwesties tot een oplossing te brengen, een gevoel van saamhorigheid, en groeps- en identiteitsvorming. *De Hervorming* vervulde daarnaast een apologetische functie in de strijd tegen orthodox machtsstreven, waarmee vooral modernen in de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk werden geconfronteerd. Ten slotte hebben discussies in *De Hervorming* niet zelden aan de basis gelegen van allerhande activiteiten zonder welke de moderne richting zich anders zou hebben ontwikkeld. Een voorbeeld daarvan is de totstandkoming van een aparte beweging van vrijzinnig-hervormden vanaf 1903.

## Deel II: Het kerkelijk-godsdienstig leven

Eén van de fundamenteën van het vrijzinnig-protestantisme is het beginsel dat ieder individu zijn godsdienstige gemoedsaandoeningen in eigen godsbeelden en in eigen geloofstaal aanschouwelijk moet maken. Van het ontstaan van de moderne theologie af, heeft het daarom ontbroken aan een nauw afgebakende dogmatiek waarmee iemand dient in te stemmen om ‘modern’ of ‘vrijzinnig’ te kunnen heten. Bij afwezigheid van gedeelde godsdienstbegrippen, heeft de eerste generatie moderneren zich een zelfbeeld aangemeten in termen van wat zij níet was en wat zij wilde zijn. Modernen identificeerden zich in oppositie tot de orthodoxie, of liever, tot wat zij voor ‘orthodox’ hielden: supranaturalisme, obscurantisme, een reactionaire gezindheid, vijandigheid tegenover gewetensvrijheid, en heerszucht. Zij beschouwden zich als de ware erfgenamen van de zestiende-eeuwse Hervorming, die christendom en cultuur tot een toekomstbestendige synthese wilden smeden. Zolang moderneren eensgezind van oordeel waren de tegenpolen van de orthodoxie en de wegbereiders van de toekomst te zijn, was het gemis van een zelfbeeld dat noch op een negatie van de orthodoxie, noch op een toekomstbelofte stoelde, niet problematisch.

Die eensgezindheid kalfde vanaf het einde van de negentiende eeuw echter in versneld tempo af. Een eerste oorzaak daarvan was de uitblijvende vervulling van de toekomstverwachting waarop de identiteit van het vrijzinnig-protestantisme mede was gebouwd. Een tweede oorzaak was de opkomst van ‘mystieke jongeren’ vóór 1900, ‘malcontenten’ in de jaren 1900 en ‘rechts-modernen’ vanaf de jaren 1910, die het door hen als te afbrekend, te intellectualistisch, te individualistisch en te weinig christocentrisch ervaren vrijzinnig-protestantisme van binnenuit tot een heroriëntering wilden bewegen. Om dat kracht bij te zetten, gaven zij als zelfaanduiding de voorkeur aan de term ‘vrijzinnig’ boven de in de negentiende eeuw meer gebruikte term ‘modern’. Andere groepen die zich aan het begin van de twintigste eeuw in vrijzinnige kring gingen manifesteren, volgden hen daarin; te weten de vrijzinnig-hervormden, voor wie de term ‘modern’ te zeer een antikerkerlijke mentaliteit uitdrukte, en de algemeen-vrijzinnigen, die de grenslijnen tussen de moderne richting en de gematigde orthodoxie hoopten uit te wissen. Het afnemende gebruik van de term ‘modern’ duidt erop dat afscheid werd genomen van de verwachtingen en pretenties die in deze term lagen opgesloten. Bovendien ging er een wens om tot meer klaarheid over de eigen identiteit te komen, achter schuil, die in een herwaardering van ‘orthodoxe’ geloofstaal en pogingen tot het formuleren van vrijzinnige ‘geloofsbelijdenissen’ resulteerde. Met het verruilen van de term ‘modern’ door ‘vrijzinnig’, werd de ambitie om het christendom te moderniseren door het in nieuwe vormen te gieten, min of meer opgegeven.

Die ‘nieuwe vormen’ hadden niet alleen nieuwe symbolen, formuleringen en beelden waarin een gemoderniseerd christendom uitgedrukt zou kunnen worden, moeten omvatten, maar ook nieuwe rituelen, een nieuwe liturgie, ja een herschapen godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven als zodanig. Onder de eerste generatie moderneren klonk de stem van de degenen die meenden dat het bestaande kerkelijk leven en kerkelijke praktijken hadden afgedaan, omdat deze op een supranaturalistische, dogmatische wereldbeschouwing waren gefundeerd, en daarom een obstakel voor de vrije ontwikkeling van het godsdienstig leven vormden, het luidst. Sommigen hoopten dat de NPB zou uitgroeien tot de geloofsgemeenschap van de toekomst, ter vervanging van het kerkelijk leven. In de praktijk ontwikkelden NPB-afdelingen zich echter tot een alternatief kerkelijk leven in plaats van tot een alternatief voor het kerkelijk leven: zij ontleenden hun aantrekkingskracht vooral aan de godsdienstoefeningen en zondagsschoollessen die zij verzorgden ten behoeve van

modernen die kerklid wilden blijven, maar in hun eigen kerkgemeenten op een orthodoxe meerderheid stuitten – veel minder aan hun potentieel om proeftuinen van een nieuw vormgegeven geloofsgemeenschap te worden. De in 1877 in Amsterdam gestichte Vrije Gemeente bedoelde wel nadrukkelijk een dergelijke proeftuin te zijn. Haar voorbeeld kreeg elders in Nederland echter geen navolging. De teleurstelling daarover bij degenen die de kerk een achterhaald instituut vonden, zorgde ervoor dat andere, meer kerkgezinde stemmen luider begonnen te klinken.

Dat werd nog eens versterkt door de welwillende toon die in *De Hervorming* werd aangeslagen tegenover de Doleantie, de exodus van de orthodoxe voorman Abraham Kuiper en zijn sympathisanten uit de Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk in 1886 en navolgende jaren. Moderne hervormden die de Doleantie beschouwden als een aanslag op de Hervormde Kerk als volkskerk, als ‘toegangspoort’ tot de niet-moderne massa, lieten een krachtig tegengeluid horen. Toen zij, ondanks het vertrek van de kuyperianen, in de loop van de jaren 1890 opnieuw te maken kregen met orthodoxe weerstand, klonk in hun midden meer en meer het verwijt dat de NPB de positie van de vrijzinnigheid in de Hervormde Kerk ernstig had verzwakt door overgangen van moderne hervormden naar de remonstranten, doopsgezinden en lutheranen te faciliteren. Onder deze groepen nam het kerkelijk bewustzijn eveneens toe, enerzijds als reactie op het luider beleden ideaal van de volkskerk in vrijzinnig-hervormde kring, anderzijds als gevolg van de instroom van vrijzinnigen uit de Hervormde Kerk. Onder hen groeide de overtuiging als opzichzelfstaande kerkgemeenschappen bestaansrecht te hebben en de NPB eigenlijk niet nodig te hebben; doordat het merendeel van zijn afdelingen tot kerkjes naast de kerken was geëvolueerd, was de NPB voor hen net zo goed een concurrent als voor hervormden. Daarbovenop bracht de opkomst van het malcontentisme en rechts-modernisme, onder zowel hervormde als niet-hervormde vrijzinnigen, een herwaardering van de kerk als instituut en kerkelijke praktijken met zich mee. De zich aldus voltrekkende ‘kerkelijke wending’ in het vroeg-twintigste-eeuwse vrijzinnig-protestantisme deed de roep om ‘nieuwe vormen’ grotendeels verstommen.

Deze ‘kerkelijke wending’ had tevens de consequentie dat de verschillende vrijzinnige kerkengroepen voor de NPB niet langer een centrale rol in de moderne richting weggelegd zagen. Zij onderkenden de noodzaak om, zonder hun zelfstandigheid prijs te geven, hun krachten te bundelen, zeker toen aan het begin van de twintigste eeuw orthodoxe machtsontplooiing op velerlei terreinen steeds duidelijker merkbaar werd, maar zij waren niet (langer) bereid de NPB daarin een sleutelpositie te geven. Krachtenbundeling, waartoe werd overgegaan in 1923, vond daarom niet plaats binnen de structuur van de NPB, maar in een speciaal daarvoor opgericht orgaan, de Centrale Commissie voor het Vrijzinnig-Protestantisme (CC). Vier jaar eerder was al gepoogd om, buiten de NPB om, vrijzinnigen tot nauwere aaneensluiting te bewegen. De Federatie van Vrij-Religieuze Groepen en Organisaties die aldus tot stand was gekomen, had een bredere grondslag dan de CC gekend: in haar waren niet alleen vrijzinnig-protestanten, maar ook zogeheten ‘kleine geloven’ als spiritisme en theosofie vertegenwoordigd geweest. Zij was echter op een mislukking uitgelopen. Meer nog dan aan haar vage profiel was het in vrijzinnig-protestantse kring breed gedeelde gevoel dat de ‘kleine geloven’ een vrije ontwikkeling van het godsdienstig leven veeleer belemmerden dan vooruithielpen, daaraan debet geweest. Terwijl vrijzinnig-protestanten tot hun teleurstelling moesten vaststellen dat andere potentiële bondgenoten (oud- en modern-katholieken, de ‘beweging der jongeren’ in de Gereformeerde Kerken, vrijzinnige joden) bij nadere beschouwing geen bondgenoten bleken te zijn of spoedig van het toneel verdwenen, wezen de

meesten van hen theosofen en spiritisten dus als medestanders in hun strijd af. Ten gevolge van de ‘kerkelijke wending’, waren vrijzinnig-protestanten godsdienstigheid zonder kerkelijke inbedding, zoals de ‘kleine geloven’, in het algemeen meer en meer als problematisch gaan ervaren. Hun eigen herwaardering van kerkelijkheid leidde ertoe dat zij andermans (groeierende) afkeer van kerkelijkheid niet diep genoeg peilden. In plaats van het tot bloei brengen van buitenkerkelijke godsdienstigheid, laat staan het vormgeven van een nieuw godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven waarin kerkelijke en buitenkerkelijke vrijzinnigheid zich kon vermengen, werd het binnenleiden van buitenkerkelijken in het kerkelijk leven zo een speerpunt in de moderne richting.

### **Deel III: Het vrijzinnig-protestantse discours**

In de discussies in vrijzinnige kring over het zoeken naar ‘nieuwe vormen’ voor een gemoderniseerd christendom vielen af en toe pleidooien voor ‘lekenprediking’, voor bediening van het predikambt door personen die geen theologie hadden gestudeerd, te beluisteren. Toch is het onderscheid tussen theologen en predikanten enerzijds en ‘leken’ anderzijds blijven bestaan. De verklaring daarvoor is gelegen in een dominant discours dat niet alleen doorklonk in gedachtewisselingen over lekenprediking, maar ook over thema’s die verband hielden met de vraag hoe vrijzinnigen een gemoderniseerd christendom op de samenleving konden laten inwerken, zoals maatschappelijk werk. Het centrale element in dit discours was de notie van een ‘geestelijke aristocratie van mentoren’. Het bevorderen van de vrije ontwikkeling van het godsdienstig leven stond of viel met het verhogen van het geestelijke ontwikkelingspeil van individuen, waarbij de term ‘geestelijk’ betrekking heeft op zowel het verstand als het gemoed als iemands moreel besef. De sleutel daartoe was het in aanraking brengen van hen die geestelijk het meest waren ontwikkeld, met geestelijk ‘minder’ ontwikkelden. In het contact tussen beiden zouden eerstgenoemden, de ‘geestelijke aristocraten’, als ‘mentoren’ van laatstgenoemden fungeren, als voorbeelden aan wie laatstgenoemden zich konden spiegelen en die hen zo konden helpen redelijk denkende, innig vrome en zedelijk hoogstaande individuen te worden. Theologen en predikanten waren ‘geestelijke aristocraten’ van professie, in wier afronding van een studie in de godgeleerdheid en bevestiging in het ambt door iemand die het predikambt reeds bekleedde, de waarborg werd gezien dat zij de geestelijke capaciteiten bezaten, dat zij geestelijk ontwikkeld genoeg waren, om in woord en daad een waarlijk stichtelijke invloed uit te oefenen. Daar deze waarborg bij een leek afwezig was, bleef het leiden van een godsdienstoefening voorbehouden aan academisch-theologisch geschoolde, in het predikambt bevestigde individuen.

Zoals gezegd, omvatte het bevorderen van de vrije ontwikkeling van het godsdienstig leven het wegnemen van sociale misstanden. De oorzaken van die sociale misstanden waren in vrijzinnige ogen primair geestelijk in plaats van stoffelijk van aard. Zaken als pauperisme, alcoholmisbruik en hebzucht werden verondersteld te wortelen in een gebrek aan inzicht in eigen ellende, een onvermogen naar het eigen geweten te luisteren en een laag ethisch besef bij degenen die onder deze misstanden gebukt gingen. Daarnaast zouden zij voortvloeien uit een gebrekkig ontwikkeld plichtsbef en afwezige gemoedsbezwaren bij degenen die in een positie waren bijstand te verlenen. Daarbij werd een impliciete koppeling gemaakt tussen een lage geestelijke ontwikkeling en een lage sociaal-economische positie. Maatschappelijk werk zou een geestelijk minder ontwikkelde en *dus* iemand behorend tot de lagere klassen in aanraking moeten brengen

met een geestelijk meer ontwikkelde en *dus* iemand afkomstig uit de burgerij. Eerstgenoemde zou zo een weldadige invloed ondergaan, terwijl laatstgenoemde de verantwoordelijkheid zou dragen die hij tegenover de maatschappij had. Aangezien moderneren ervan uitgingen dat het verstands-, gemoeds- en zedelijk leven innig met elkaar verbonden waren, impliceerde het in vrijzinnige kring dominante discours dat moderneren zélf de geestelijke aristocraten bij uitstek waren: zij meenden immers de redelijkste godsdienstige denkbeelden te hebben, te weten wat ware vroomheid betekende, en de zedelijke bedoeling van het christendom het best te verstaan.

#### **Deel IV: Het cultureel-maatschappelijk en staatkundig leven**

Om het karakter van maatschappelijk werk als omgang tussen individuen, aangeduid met de term ‘toynbeewerk’, te bewaren, werd rond 1900 na veel discussie besloten dergelijk werk niet centraal onder de vlag van de landelijke NPB te organiseren. Anders, zo werd gevreesd, zou toynbeewerk onbedoeld een activiteit ter popularisering van het vrijzinnig-protestantisme worden in plaats van louter een onbaatzuchtige daad van naastenliefde zijn. Bovendien zouden NPB-leden dan niet alleen de ‘perverse prikkel’ kunnen krijgen zich niet *persoonlijk* voor maatschappelijk werk te engageren, maar ook *als collectief* de verantwoordelijkheid dragen voor specifieke vormen van maatschappelijk engagement, inclusief die leden die dat niet wilden. Niet alle moderneren waren er even mee ingenomen dat de NPB slechts tot maatschappelijk dienstbetoon wilde oproepen zonder zelf tot maatschappelijke dienstverlening over te gaan. Zij waarschuwden ervoor dat de NPB de lagere klassen zo in versterkte mate van zich zou doen vervreemden. Die vervreemding werd op dat moment al gevoed door de socialistische arbeidersbeweging, die in de lagere klassen een groeiende aantrekkingskracht uitoefende. In directe tegenspraak met het in vrijzinnige kring dominante discours, stoelde het socialisme op de gedachte dat een hervorming van de structuur van de samenleving aan persoonsvorming zou moeten voorafgaan, ja dat zij een voorwaarde voor individuele zelfverwerkelijking was, en dat de burgermaatschappij derhalve zou moeten verdwijnen. De vroege arbeidersbeweging was doordrongen van een antigodsdienstige gezindheid. Haar aanvoerder Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, een voormalige vrijzinnig-lutherse predikant in wie voor het socialisme gewonnen arbeiders een ‘verlosser’ begroetten, zette het vrijzinnig-protestantisme neer als halfslachtig, behept met een moreel superioriteitsgevoel, zelfvoldaan, burgerlijk en dus als socialismevijandig. Latere socialistische voorlieden hebben het negatieve beeld van de vrijzinnigheid dat voor een groot deel door zijn toedoen in het collectieve bewustzijn van de arbeidersbeweging verankerd raakte, niet bijgesteld.

In de moderne richting had de vroege arbeidersbeweging, op haar beurt, een slechte pers: zij werd afgeschilderd als demagogisch, materialistisch, onethisch en vijandig jegens de vrijheid van het individu. Vanaf het einde van de jaren tachtig van de negentiende eeuw kreeg het woord ‘socialisme’ voor sommige vrijzinnige opiniemakers echter een positievere klank, eerst in algemeen-culturele zin, als aanduiding van een samenlevingsideaal waarin een sterke gemeenschapsgedachte ongebreideld individualisme zou beteugelen, later ook expliciet in politieke zin. Nadat bij hen de overtuiging had postgevat dat de arbeidersbeweging individuen juist wilde bevrijden uit de ketenen die zelfverwerkelijking belemmerden, net als de moderne richting, gingen sommige vrijzinnige predikanten zich actief met socialistische politiek bezighouden. Hoewel zij hun stem luidkeels verhieven, bleef hun aantal klein; in de moderne richting bleef een meerderheid in politiek opzicht liberaal en zich bedienen van het boven



beschreven discours dat zo haaks stond op het socialistische. Buitendien slaagden de ‘rode dominees’ er niet in de kloof tussen de lagere klassen en de in de burgerij gewortelde moderne richting te verkleinen; zij werden slechts een apart ‘hokje’ in zowel de socialistische beweging als het vrijzinnig-protestantisme.

Door het discours van de ‘geestelijke aristocratie van mentoren’ ontbrak het de moderne richting niet alleen aan werfkracht aan de onderkant van de maatschappij, maar ook aan het andere uiteinde van de maatschappelijke ladder, onder academici, publicisten en cultuurdragers naar wie in vrijzinnige kring als ‘intellectuelen’ werd verwezen. Al enkele jaren nadat de moderne richting zich begon te manifesteren, in de jaren zestig van de negentiende eeuw, begon zij uit de gratie te raken bij de sociaal-culturele elite die haar aanvankelijk met een zekere welwillendheid had begroet. Teleurgestelde moderngezinde predikanten die hun ambt neerlegden en zich volledig aan de schone letteren of de journalistiek gingen wijden, van wie Allard Pierson en Conrad Busken Huet de bekendste en invloedrijkste voorbeelden zijn, droegen daaraan bij. In letterkundige kring zette zich zo een beeld van het vrijzinnig-protestantisme vast als een tot zedenleer verschrompelde godsdienstige vaagheid, als een halfslachtige poging om wetenschap en godsdienst met elkaar te harmoniseren, en als een in zelfvoldaanheid zwelgende beweging die er niet in slaagde de tot de kern van haar wezen behorende verwachtingen en pretenties waar te maken. In de manier waarop zij vervolgens op contemporaine letterkundige arbeid hebben gereageerd, hebben vrijzinnigen zélf aan bestendiging van dat negatieve beeld meegewerkt. Voor hen was niet esthetiek, maar ethiek het ultieme criterium in literatuurkritiek; hun finale oordeel van een literair werk hing af van de mate waarin auteurs en romanpersonages er blijk van gaven ‘geestelijke aristocraten’ te zijn. Velen schoten daarin volgens vrijzinnige recensenten, in vrijwel alle gevallen dienstdoende predikanten, tekort. In vrijzinnige literatuurkritiek vonden ‘intellectuelen’ bevestiging van hun antipathie jegens het vrijzinnig-protestantisme; die kritiek weerspiegelde voor hen het moralisme, de morele hypocrisie, de loomheid, de bekrompenheid en het klassenbewustzijn van de burgermaatschappij waarvan zij zich in toenemende mate distantieerden.

Het bovenbeschreven discours sloot nauw aan bij wat in de politiek door het liberalisme werd uitgedragen. Tot aan het begin van de jaren 1890 ontmoette het veelvuldig geuite gevoel dat modernen in politiek opzicht ‘van nature’ liberaal waren, geen tegenspraak. Een langzaam groeiend draagvlak voor het politieke socialisme in moderne kring bracht daarin, zoals gezegd, enige verandering. Bovendien nam ook onder de modernen die met het politieke liberalisme bleven sympathiseren (en hun socialistische geloofsgenoten in aantal bleven overtreffen), onvrede over liberale politiek toe. Liberale politici zouden zich in meerderheid religieus onverschillig betonen en rooms-katholieken en gereformeerden zo in het staatkundig en maatschappelijk leven de wind in de zeilen hebben gegeven. Datzelfde verwijt trof ook maatschappelijke organisaties op ‘algemene’, ‘neutrale’ grondslag. Terwijl rooms-katholieken en gereformeerden driftig allerlei organisaties op de grondslag van de eigen levensbeschouwing oprichtten, een proces dat in de historiografie de naam ‘verzuiling’ heeft gekregen, en daardoor volop gelegenheid hadden op alle terreinen van het maatschappelijk middenveld een woord mee te spreken, becroop vrijzinnigen meer en meer een gevoel van marginalisering. De opkomst van het malcontentisme en het rechts-modernisme deed onder hen het gevoel toenemen dat vrijzinnig christendom in organisaties zonder expliciet-godsdienstige grondslag nooit volledig tot zijn recht zou kunnen komen. De aldus

aangezwengelde discussie over de wenselijkheid van aparte vrijzinnig-protestantse organisaties had enkele initiatieven tot gevolg, zoals pogingen de zichtbaarheid en invloed van vrijzinnigen in de politieke arena te versterken, de totstandkoming van een vrijzinnige jeugdbeweging, een aanzet tot schoolstichting van vrijzinnige signatuur en de oprichting van de VPRO. Deze initiatieven, het ene succesvoller dan het andere, werden alle genomen in reactie op en zelfs in navolging van de verzuilingsdrang van rooms-katholieken en gereformeerden. Zij vonden hun basis in de overtuiging dat vrijzinnigen simpelweg geen andere keuze restte, omdat vrijzinnigen in het maatschappelijk leven anders op den duur helemaal niet meer gehoord zouden worden.

## **Deel V: De internationale context**

Het discours van de ‘geestelijke aristocratie van mentoren’ klonk door in een periodiek opflakkerende discussie die verband hield met de vraag of het bedrijven van (uitwendige) zending onderdeel zou moeten zijn van het streven naar de verbreiding van een gemoderniseerd christendom. Sommige modernen gaven daarop een bevestigend antwoord. Zij waren van mening dat de bevordering van een vrije ontwikkeling van het godsdienstig leven zich niet diende te beperken tot Nederland of andere ‘beschaafde’ samenlevingen die historisch gezien binnen de culturele invloedssfeer van het christendom vielen. Onder niet-gekerstende volkeren zou het godsdienstig leven zich huns inziens niet vrij kunnen ontwikkelen zolang deze volkeren geboeid bleven in de ketenen van onwetendheid, paganisme en barbarij. Vrijzinnige pleitbezorgers van zending beschouwden het als een morele plicht om niet-christenen in de toenmalige koloniale wereld te helpen zich cognitief, zielkundig en ethisch te ontwikkelen door hen in aanraking te brengen met ‘geestelijke aristocraten’. In hun ogen konden alleen modernen die rol vervullen: ‘kerstening’ betekende volgens hen bij rooms-katholieke missionarissen en orthodox-protestantse zendelingen simpelweg het verruilen van voornoemde ketenen door nieuwe ketenen, namelijk die van dogmatisme, ritualisme en obscurantisme. Vrijzinnige voorstanders van zending stelden daar een interpretatie van ‘kerstening’ tegenover die niet neerkwam op het toedienen van de doop en het geven van onderwijs in een specifieke geloofsleer, maar op het als een zuurdesem op niet-christelijke samenlevingen laten inwerken van bepaalde levensbeginselen waaruit voor hen de essentie van het christendom bestond. Zij meenden daarnaast dat het bedrijven van zending een positieve weerslag op het vrijzinnig-protestantisme in Nederland zou hebben: het zou de strijdbaarheid vergroten en tot meer klaarheid in de eigen godsdienstige voorstellingswereld leiden. Enkelen onder deze voorstanders vonden dat zending zich moest concentreren op ‘cultuurvolkeren’ als Japanners, Indiërs en Chinezen, die al een zeker beschavingspeil hadden bereikt. In tegenstelling tot ‘natuurvolkeren’, werden dezen daardoor verondersteld een geestesleven te bezitten dat voldoende intrinsieke aanknopingspunten bood voor kerstening in de bovenbeschreven zin.

Toch bleef de zendingsijver in vrijzinnige kring laag; een meerderheid gaf er blijk van zending niet als bevordering van, maar juist als té grote inmenging in een vrije ontwikkeling van het godsdienstig leven te beschouwen. Het geestelijke ontwikkelingsniveau van niet-gekerstende volkeren zou eerst op ‘natuurlijke’ wijze moeten groeien. Verondersteld werd dat een behoefte aan vrijzinnig-godsdienstige beginselen zich onder deze volkeren vervolgens onvermijdelijk vanzelf zou openbaren. (Mogelijke) betrokkenheid bij activiteiten van het Nederlandsch Zendeling-Genootschap onder inheemsen in Nederlands-Indië, waarop de discussie over zending zich in

vrijzinnige kring toespitste, maakte daarom weinig enthousiasme los. Modernen hadden bovendien al hun handen vol aan het verdedigen, laat staan het versterken, van hun eigen positie in het kerkelijk en maatschappelijk leven in Nederland.

Dat zij weinig voor zending voelden, betekende niet dat het Nederlandse moderneren aan een internationale oriëntatie ontbrak. Via de Nederlandse Protestantenvbond onderhielden zij contacten met verwante groeperingen buiten Nederland, zoals de Duitse *Protestantenverein*, de Elzassische *Union protestante libérale* en unitariërs in het Verenigd Koninkrijk en de Verenigde Staten. Deze groeperingen stuurden over en weer afgevaardigden naar elkaars jaarlijkse bijeenkomsten, corresponderden met en over elkaar in *De Hervorming* en soortgelijke buitenlandse opiniebladen, belegden vanaf 1901 gezamenlijke internationale conferenties, en formaliseerden hun banden uiteindelijk in 1930 in de vorm van het Internationaal Verbond voor Vrijzinnig Christendom en Geloofsvrijheid. In weerwil van contextafhankelijke bijzonderheden en verschillen, hebben zij in hoofdlijnen eenzelfde ontwikkeling doorgemaakt. Tijdens hun vroegste ontwikkelingsfase werden in al deze groeperingen hoge verwachtingen gekoesterd omtrent de aantrekkingskracht, het hervormingspotentieel en de superioriteit van het vrijzinnig-protestantisme. Nergens kwamen die verwachtingen echter uit: het vrijzinnig-protestantisme groeide niet uit tot hoofdstroming in kerk en samenleving, en bracht geen nieuwe vorm voor godsdienstig gemeenschapsleven tot stand. Overal leidde dat tot herbezinning op de eigen identiteit en een daarmee samenhangende herpositionering ten opzichte van de orthodoxie, alsook tot gevoelens van teleurstelling, marginalisering en zelfs defaitisme. Zowel in Nederland als elders bleef het vrijzinnig-protestantisme steunen op de burgerij: het wist noch een sterke voet aan de grond te krijgen in de lagere klassen, noch degenen die in het cultureel-intellectuele leven de toon zetten, blijvend aan zich te binden. Het gebrek aan werf- en hervormingskracht dat de in deze studie uiteengezette analyse van de geschiedenis van de moderne richting in Nederland aan het licht heeft gebracht, wortelde dan ook niet uitsluitend in factoren eigen aan de Nederlandse context, zoals de verzuiling; het was evenzeer inherent aan het vrijzinnig-protestantisme zelf, in het bijzonder aan zijn burgerlijke karakter.

### Slotbeschouwing

Alles overziende, laat de geschiedenis van het Nederlandse vrijzinnig-protestantisme tussen 1870 en 1940 zich samenvatten in een paradox. De zelfverklaarde herauten van een gemoderniseerd, toekomstbestendig christendom boetten juist meer en meer aan zichtbaarheid en invloed in het kerkelijk en maatschappelijk leven in naarmate de tijd voortschreed. Zoals dit proefschrift betoogt, hing het een direct met het ander samen. Vanuit de overtuiging dat de toekomst onvermijdelijk aan het vrijzinnig-protestantisme was, anticipeerden de vroegste moderneren op een wereld die uiteindelijk aan hen gelijkvormig zou worden. Zolang een politiek liberaal georiënteerde burgerij die in grote mate hun normen, waarden en idealen deelde, in kerk, staat en maatschappij de toon zou aangeven, leken zij in die overtuiging bevestigd te worden. De burgerlijke normen, waarden en idealen die in het hun kring dominante discours uitdrukking vonden, kwamen echter steeds meer onder druk te staan – van onderop (door de opgang van het socialisme in de arbeidersklasse), van bovenop (door een groeiende aversie tegen de burgermaatschappij in intellectueel-culturele kring), van rechts (door een krachtige machtsontplooiing van orthodoxe vormen van christendom) en van links (door toenemende buitenkerkelijkheid). Toen dat ten volle voelbaar en zichtbaar

werd, rond 1900, raakte de moderne richting doordeesemd met een gevoel van marginalisering. Ten gevolge daarvan maakte offensieve hervormingsgezindheid plaats voor een defensieve attitude waarin het tegengaan van verdere marginalisering de boventoon voerde.

Het is tegen die achtergrond dat in de afzonderlijke hoofdstukken beschreven ontwikkelingen in de moderne richting – zoals het afnemende gebruik van de term ‘modern’ ten gunste van de term ‘vrijzinnig’, de kerkelijke wending, pogingen tot concentratievorming, de toetreding van predikanten tot socialistische politieke partijen, de transformatie van *De Hervorming* in een blad ter beïnvloeding van het intellectueel-culturele leven, de roep om en aanzet tot organisatievorming, pleidooien voor meer zendingsijver, en geïntensiveerde contacten met vrijzinnigen buiten Nederland – begrepen moeten worden. Omdat de omstandigheden zich niet aan hen hadden aangepast, waren modernen genoodzaakt zich aan de omstandigheden aan te passen, om te waarborgen dat zij in het kerkelijk en maatschappelijk leven gehoord zouden blijven worden.



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## CURRICULUM VITAE

Tom-Eric Krijger (Tiel, the Netherlands, 1987) entered academic life in 2005 as a bachelor student in History at Utrecht University. A year later, he was selected to participate in the two-year university-wide Honours Minor and started with a two-year minor in Public Administration and Organisational Science next to his major in History. He graduated *cum laude* in 2008 with a BA thesis on the church policy of Dutch King William I. Still at Utrecht University, Krijger subsequently started with a research master in History. In preparation of his RMA thesis on neo-Calvinism in Dutch-speaking Belgium, he spent several months as a visiting student at the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Brussels in late 2009 and early 2010. He graduated *cum laude* in 2010. Afterwards, Krijger began with a master in Religious Studies at Utrecht University. On completion of this MA programme, for which he graduated *cum laude* in 2011, he wrote a thesis on the Dutch neo-Calvinist ‘diaspora’ in Europe and the Americas. For this thesis, he received the *Prof S. van der Linde Scriptieprijs*, a prize given every three years to the best thesis on Reformation history defended at a Dutch university, in 2012.

In late 2011, Krijger was granted a fully funded position as a PhD researcher at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Groningen, working on a dissertation on the history of Dutch liberal Protestantism under the supervision of Prof M.P.A. de Baar and Prof H.M. Kirn. Between 2013 and 2015, he taught several classes on the cultural history of Christianity in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Netherlands at this faculty. In those same years, Krijger was the chairman of the faculty PhD Council and PhD representative in the general Faculty Council. From January until April 2015, he was a visiting PhD student at Harvard Divinity School at Harvard University in Cambridge, Massachusetts (USA), for which he received a grant of the *Stichting ‘De Honderd Gulden Reis’*. In February and March 2016, Krijger was a Scaliger Fellow at Leiden University, conducting research in the archives of Dutch liberal Protestant theologians.

Next to liberal Protestantism, Krijger published articles on a variety of other subjects, ranging from neo-Calvinism to political history, in various journals in the past years. He is currently in the board of editors of the *Historisch Tijdschrift GKN*, a nationally distributed periodical devoted to the history of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, and lecturer in Dutch religious history at Leiden University.

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(December 2016)

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